



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

THURSDAY — 2 JUN 2022



	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	06/02 Day 99 of the Russia invasion 06/02 UK pledges missiles to Ukraine 06/02 Russia tightens grip on industrial city 06/02 Ukraine SBU hunt Russia supporters 06/02 US intel: Putin cancer treatment in April 06/02 Ukraine: Russia occupies 20% of territory 06/02 US, Germany advanced weapons to Ukraine 06/02 US, Taiwan announce trade initiative 06/02 China warns New Zealand on trade ties 06/02 UK celebrates Queen Elizabeth in jubilee 06/02 Shanghai bans media use term 'lockdown'? 06/02 French diplomatic corps on day-long strike 06/02 Libya slides back toward violence, chaos 06/01 Ukraine 2-out-of-3 children displaced 06/01 Ukraine soldiers are under relentless fire 06/01 Russia slow, bloody slog eastern Ukraine 06/01 Hundreds of Russian troops broke ranks? 06/01 Putin's coffers swelling despite sanctions 06/01 Putin threats highlight new risky nuclear era 06/01 WHO: Covid 'getting worse' in NKorea 06/01 WHO: monkeypox spreading undetected 06/01 South Africa infections despite antibodies 06/01 Relief, anxiety as Shanghai mostly reopens 06/01 Iraq: Iran gas cuts will cause shortages 06/01 Denmark votes to join EU defense policy 05/31 Canada tests decriminalizing drugs in B.C. 05/31 Drought ravaging across the Horn of Africa	06/02 Gun suicide deaths among youth soars 06/02 Average gas price hits new record \$4.71/gal 06/01 Gas prices above \$4 all states 06/01 Baby formula shortage worsens 06/01 Calif. new Covid surge still disruptive 06/01 Job openings decline but remain high 06/01 Tesla, SpaceX return to office or get out 06/01 Cabinet secretaries test positive for Covid 06/01 Covid cases 30-times higher than reported? 06/01 Income tax collections historic levels 06/01 Jury awards Johnny Depp \$10M libel case 06/01 Calif. report: reparations Black Americans 06/01 Ex-Corinthian students' federal debt erased 06/01 Texas border gaps: razor wire, prosecutions 06/01 Pride parades ban police participation 06/01 Northcom: threats to homeland surging 06/01 RIMPAC: world largest int'l maritime drill 06/01 California amid worst drought in 1,200yrs 06/01 Southern Calif. historic water restrictions	06/01 Seattle, Tacoma officials: violent summer 06/01 Officials struggle fill vacant lifeguard jobs 06/01 Seattle police crisis worsens; more leave 06/01 SPD staff shortage hits sexual assault unit 06/01 Seattle voids, refunds 7mo. parking tickets 06/01 Sound Transit light rail service disruptions 06/01 SEA rise in lost items over holiday weekend 06/01 Olympia students protest gun violence 06/01 Protesters 'die-in' Amazon Pride Month 06/01 Fish for free anywhere in WA 11-12 June
Cyber Awareness Go to articles	06/02 Elasticsearch databases held for ransom 06/01 Europol takes down FluBot operation 06/01 DeFi cyberattacks \$1.8B in losses 2021 06/01 How Kremlin infiltrated Russia's Facebook 06/01 More healthcare organizations pay ransom 06/01 Ransomware group claims Foxconn breach	06/01 First NFT insider trading scheme charges 06/01 Russia no longer prosecuting REvil for US 06/01 Racist, violent ideas: fringe to mainstream 06/01 Ransomware attacks: under 96hrs encrypt 06/01 FBI warns about Russia destructive attacks 06/01 FBI thwarts cyberattack on Boston hospital 06/01 Feds warn against paying Karakurt ransoms 05/31 DOJ seizes domains selling stolen data	05/31 Website tracks homelessness in Seattle
Terror Conditions Go to articles	06/02 Taliban campaign to eradicate poppy crop 05/31 Pakistan, TTP agree to indefinite ceasefire	06/01 German anti-terror group in Pittsburgh 06/01 Buffalo suspect domestic terrorism charge	
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	06/02 Avian flu takes growing toll on wildlife	06/02 What's behind rise ADHD diagnoses? 06/01 Coffee drinking link to lower risk of dying?	06/01 Avian flu wild birds Seattle, Bellevue parks
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	06/02 Nightclub needle attacks puzzle Europe 06/01 Cali cartel boss dies in US prison	06/02 Arrest: 16yr-old in mass shooting plot 06/02 Report: Rwanda threatens exiles in US 06/02 Disturbing new pattern: young assailants 06/01 Uvalde: role of doors in security plans 06/01 Uvalde SD police chief speaks publicly 06/01 Mass shooting Tulsa medical bldg.; 4 killed 06/01 Leader Mexican drug cell in US jailed 16yrs 06/01 Hinckley, shot Reagan, to get full freedom	06/01 Seattle Chinatown-ID stabbing injures 1 06/01 SPD halts adult sex assault investigations 06/01 Police fatally shoot murder suspect in Kent 06/01 Spokane police arrest boy for threats to kill 06/01 Spokane 2 arrests; Home Depot arson, theft

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Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	06/02 US intel: Putin cancer treatment in April
SOURCE	https://www.newsweek.com/exclusive-putin-treated-cancer-april-us-intelligence-report-says-1710357?

Vladimir Putin's health is a subject of intense conversation inside the Biden administration after the intelligence community produced its fourth comprehensive assessment at the end of May. The classified U.S. report says Putin seems to have re-emerged after undergoing treatment in April for advanced cancer, three U.S. intelligence leaders who have read the reports tell *Newsweek*.

The assessments also confirm that there was an assassination attempt on Putin's life in March, the officials say.

The high-ranking officials, who represent three separate intelligence agencies, are concerned that Putin is increasingly paranoid about his hold on power, a status that makes for a rocky and unpredictable course in Ukraine. But it is one, they say, that also makes the prospects of nuclear war less likely.

"Putin's grip is strong but no longer absolute," says one of the senior intelligence officers with direct access to the reports. "The jockeying inside the Kremlin has never been more intense during his rule, everyone sensing that the end is near."

All three officials—one from the office of the Director of National Intelligence, one a retired Air Force senior officer, and one from the Defense Intelligence Agency—caution that the Russian leader's isolation makes it more difficult for U.S. intelligence to precisely assess Putin's status and health.

"What we know is that there is an iceberg out there, albeit one covered in fog," says the DNI leader, who communicated with *Newsweek* via email and requested anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

"One source of our best intelligence, which is contact with outsiders, largely dried up as a result of the Ukraine war," says the DIA senior official. "Putin has had few meetings with foreign leaders," the official says, cutting off the insights that can sometimes be gained in face-to-face encounters. "Putin's isolation has thus increased levels of speculation."

"We need to be mindful of the influence of wishful thinking," cautions the retired Air Force leader. "We learned—or didn't learn—that lesson the hard way with Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein."

A picture of manhood

Horseback-riding, hockey-playing [Vladimir Putin](#) has been the image of masculinity and vitality for years, a persona carefully curated by official Moscow and one often used by Kremlin propagandists to contrast the Russian leader with his American counterparts.

Then came the very long table that Putin used in the Kremlin to record the photo ops of his important meetings, one that came to symbolize his paranoia and physical fear.

The table most recently was the venue for Putin's meeting with French President [Emmanuel Macron](#) on February 7, just two weeks before the Ukraine invasion. For the intelligence community, the long table and Putin's behavior with Macron became a baseline against which to measure the Russian president's decline.

"There was no shaking of hands, no warm embrace, and we noticed that," says the DNI leader. He said that French intelligence had many observations from the meeting and the trip to Moscow, declining to elaborate on what was reported back to the U.S. government.

Then came Putin's April 21 meeting with Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, this time at a small table, the hue all green and peaceful. Many focused on Shoigu, who had been missing from the public eye. But it was Putin who had largely been absent for much of the month, and he was far from a picture of health, slouching in his chair and [gripping the table](#) with his right hand.

Some observers inferred that the Russian leader had Parkinson's disease. Others insisted it was just his [KGB](#) weapons training, referring to his rigid stance and walk, always with the right arm ready to reach inside a jacket for a gun. The video was closely scrutinized by intelligence community analysts, some

trained in remote diagnosis and others in psychiatry. Many pieces of intelligence were analyzed for the White House: the consensus was that Putin was ill and probably dying. He seemed to be putting on a good show. But perhaps the isolation of COVID had masked a decline that was only now more vividly being exposed.

The May 9 "Victory Day" [appearance](#) was next, where a noticeably bloated Russian leader sat slumped. Putin's health, and his inability (or reluctance) to declare victory in Ukraine went together. The U.S. intelligence community agreed that his situation was graver than previously thought, and his physical exhaustion was matched by Russia's own exhaustion.

Three days later, Ukraine's head of intelligence Maj. Gen. Kyrylo Budanov told U.K. Sky News that Putin was in a "very bad psychological and physical condition and he is very sick," adding that there were plans inside the Kremlin to overthrow the Russian leader.

A rumor that Kremlin security people had uncovered a Russian plot to assassinate Putin was confirmed at this time. The [CIA](#) and foreign intelligence services were picking up consistent stories of discord at the top of the national security ministries, as well as the desire on the part of Russian diplomats to defect to the west.

"Someone once seen as omnipotent was now mostly seen as struggling with the future, his own in particular," says the DNI leader.

The Saddam and bin Laden effect

When serious intelligence started to circulate about Putin's illness, U.S. leaders were cautioned not to jump to conclusions too quickly, reminded of examples of hot "intelligence" about Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein that shaped U.S. policy and then proved questionable.

In Saddam's case, the question was whether he was psychologically disturbed and what he would do next with his weapons of mass destruction. In Osama bin Laden's case, before and after 9/11, it was whether he was dying, probably from kidney disease, and how that might influence his decisions.

Though U.S. intelligence knew little about the al Qaeda leader (and paid insufficient attention to what it did know before the World Trade Center and [Pentagon](#) attacks), the state of his health was a constant part of reporting during the late 1990's. The most persistent rumor was that bin Laden was weak and fragile, requiring regular dialysis that was unlikely to be available in a cave. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf affirmed that bin Laden was dying; other Pakistani officials—the source of much bin Laden intelligence—agreed.

Throughout those years the Saudi government was always ready with some gossip about their native son, tidbits that were always negative, questioning his achievements and his piety. A young Bin Laden whored and partied in Beirut and on the Riviera, the rumors said. Bin Laden didn't graduate from university, dropping out. Bin Laden didn't really go to Afghanistan after the Soviets invaded. Bin Laden didn't fight once he did go. The news media picked up all of these rumors, as did U.S. leaders, failing to take into account that the Pakistanis were reporting what they thought would dissuade the U.S. from focusing too much on bin Laden, while the Saudis thought that deprecating his honor and religious devotion would dissuade more young men from following the renegade son.

Lost in the wishful thinking was the key to bin Laden's power over his fiercely loyal disciples: his grievances with the West were their grievances, too.

"What Musharraf has to say carries more weight [with U.S. policymakers] than anything the CIA might say," the senior Air Force leader tells *Newsweek*. "What the Saudis tell their American counterparts can be incredibly influential. Thus many wanted to believe that he was sick and couldn't believe that he was the charismatic leader that he was.

"Is Putin sick? Absolutely. But we shouldn't let waiting for his death drive proactive actions on our part. A power vacuum after Putin could be very dangerous for the world."

Saddam Hussein was considered one of the most dangerous men in the world, with CIA psychological assessments that portrayed him as a madman, a man who would never give up his WMD, a man so hated and vulnerable he had to sleep in a different bed every night. The evidence that Saddam did not have WMDs was ignored by Bush administration leaders who thought they knew better.

But the CIA wasn't solely to blame for the false belief that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. High-level assessments offered by foreign leaders had an enormous impact.

"Hosni Mubarak [of Egypt], Abdullah [of Jordan], the Kuwaiti ruler himself—they all told Bush administration leaders that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction," says the retired Air Force leader. Where did the foreign leaders get their intelligence? From Saddam Hussein himself: it was an intentional deception on the part of the Iraqi leader to persuade the Bush administration not to invade and seek regime change, an implicit threat that he would use WMD if they did.

In some cases, experts now agree, some of that intelligence from foreign leaders, shared face-to-face with Bush counterparts, didn't circulate widely in the Agency. There was a clash between technical analysis that often doubted the existence of WMDs versus the Bush leadership's conviction that the U.S. intelligence community was a victim of group-think and that Saddam's public denials about WMDs were lies. (In fact it was his confidential whispers that were the lies.) That cognitive gap helped lead to war.

An expiration date?

The U.S. intelligence community's latest assessment for President Biden and other senior leaders saw a turnaround for the Russian leader after the previous report, compiled about two weeks earlier, portrayed him as gravely ill. On one day—May 26—he made his first public visit to a Moscow military hospital. He had a phone call with Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi. And he spoke to a Russian business conference via video. Each appearance was closely scrutinized. This Monday, Putin had a phone call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan where the two discussed the possibility of a face-to-face meeting with Ukrainian President Zelensky.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov dismissed any notion of Putin being sick in an interview on French TV last weekend. "I don't think that a sane person can suspect any signs of an illness or ailment in this man," Lavrov said, citing Putin's recent public appearances.

"Lavrov's insistence that everything is normal is as much a declaration of allegiance to Putin as it is any kind of diagnosis to be listened to," says the DIA official. The official says that Putin continues to be "challenged" both health-wise and in his leadership.

Are the lessons of bin Laden and Saddam being applied to Vladimir Putin? Is he fighting off Kremlin opponents and warring with his own intelligence agencies? Is he indeed dying? What—or who—comes next? These are the issues that the Biden administration is grappling with even as they publicly insist that rumors of Putin dying are just rumors.

"Even if they agree that the intelligence [that Putin is dying] is reliable," the senior DNI leader says, "they can't bank on an expiration date nor signal their support for a Russia without Putin." Both President Biden and Secretary of Defense [Lloyd Austin](#) have let slip their desire not only for regime change but also the fall of Russia, and both have since walked back their indelicate statements.

"A nuclear-armed Russia is still a nuclear-armed Russia, whether Putin is strong or weak, in or out, and not wanting to provoke him or his potential successor into thinking we are hell bent on their destruction is an important part of continued strategic stability," says the DNI official.

	<p>The DIA leader argues that in some ways, "Putin being sick or dying is good for the world, not just because of the future of Russia or ending the Ukraine war, but in diminishing the mad man threat of nuclear war.</p> <p>"A weakened Putin—an obviously declining leader, not one at the top of his game—has less influence over his advisors and subordinates, say, if he orders the use of nukes."</p> <p>As the official explains it, a strong Putin could bully his way through, overcoming objections from ministers and commanders. But a damaged Putin (and here the official mentions Donald Trump as a similar example), "one who might not be in control of all of his faculties, just doesn't have that kind of sway."</p> <p>"Putin is definitely sick ... whether he's going to die soon is mere speculation," the DIA official says. "Still, we shouldn't rest assured. We shouldn't answer our own mail, if you will, believing only the intelligence that affirms our own desired outcome. He's still dangerous, and chaos does lie ahead if he does die. We need to focus on that. Be ready."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/02 US, Taiwan announce trade initiative
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/06/02/Taiwan-trade-initiative-beijing-objection/7181654165914/
GIST	<p>June 2 (UPI) -- The United States and Taiwan announced an initiative meant to strengthen economic ties on the heels of a Washington-led regional trade pact that excluded Taipei.</p> <p>The U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st-Century Trade, unveiled Wednesday, officially kicks off trade negotiations between the countries.</p> <p>The agreement "is intended to develop concrete ways to deepen the economic and trade relationship, advance mutual trade priorities based on shared values, and promote innovation and inclusive economic growth," the Office of the United States Trade Representative said in a statement.</p> <p>Taiwanese Premier Su Tseng-chang said Thursday at a cabinet meeting that the initiative "draws a complete roadmap for the signing of a Taiwan-U.S. trade agreement."</p> <p>"Taiwan has an indispensable key position in the global supply chain," Su said. "The U.S. government realizes that it must strengthen economic and trade links with our country in order to consolidate the resilience and security of the global supply chain."</p> <p>Taiwan is one of the world's largest producers of semiconductors and other electronic components, accounting for more than 60% of the global contract chip manufacturing market.</p> <p>The talks come a week after U.S. President Joe Biden unveiled his administration's long-awaited regional economic plan, the 13-country Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, or IPEF.</p> <p>Taiwan was not invited to join the IPEF, amid reports that some member countries were concerned its inclusion would antagonize China.</p> <p>Beijing considers the self-governing island a wayward province and has worked to isolate Taipei diplomatically and exclude it from international organizations.</p> <p>China's Commerce Ministry voiced "strong objections" to the U.S.-Taiwan initiative on Thursday.</p> <p>Washington should "prudently handle its economic and trade relations with Taiwan region and avoid sending wrong signals to 'Taiwan independence' forces," ministry spokesman Gao Feng said, according to state-run television network CGTN.</p>

	<p>Beijing has opposed official exchanges between Taiwan and other countries, "including the signing of any economic and trade agreement with sovereign connotations," Gao said.</p> <p>President Biden sparked an angry outcry in Beijing last week when he said that the United States would come to Taiwan's aid militarily if China launched an invasion.</p> <p>Beijing also protested a visit by U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth this week to discuss regional security and trade issues with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen.</p> <p>China has ramped up its military provocations against Taiwan in recent weeks and warned Wednesday of "serious consequences" if Washington continued to strengthen ties with Taipei.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/02 Ukraine: Russia occupies 20% of territory
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-occupies-20-ukraines-territory-zelenskiy-2022-06-02/
GIST	<p>June 2 (Reuters) - Russia is currently occupying about 20% of Ukraine's territory, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy told Luxembourg's parliament in a video address on Thursday.</p> <p>"We have to defend ourselves against almost the entire Russian army. All combat-ready Russian military formations are involved in this aggression," he said, adding that the front lines of battle stretched across more than 1,000 kilometres (620 miles).</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/02 Russia tightens grip on industrial city
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russians-consolidate-hold-ukrainian-city-us-give-kyiv-advanced-rockets-2022-06-02/
GIST	<p>KYIV, June 2 (Reuters) - Russian forces tightened their grip on an industrial Ukrainian city as part of their drive to control the eastern Donbas region and targeted rail links used to ferry in weapons from Kyiv's Western allies as the war approaches its 100th day on Friday.</p> <p>Russia has accused the United States of adding "fuel to the fire" after President Joe Biden announced a \$700 million weapons package for Kyiv that will include advanced rocket systems with a range of up to 80 km (50 miles).</p> <p>Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy told a forum in Slovakia that Kyiv was grateful for the military aid it has received but added: "Weapons supplies should be stepped up ... (to) ensure an inflection point in this confrontation."</p> <p>U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Ukraine had promised it would not use the systems to hit targets inside Russia. Biden hopes extending Ukraine's artillery reach will help push Russia to negotiate an end to a war in which thousands of people have been killed, cities and towns flattened and more than six million people forced to flee the country.</p> <p>"Ukraine needs weapons to liberate Ukrainian territory that Russia has temporarily occupied. We are not fighting on Russian territory, we are interested in our sovereignty and territorial integrity," said Andriy Yermak, Zelenskiy's chief of staff, shrugging off Moscow's criticism of the U.S. decision.</p> <p>Moscow has said it regards Ukrainian infrastructure used to bring in Western arms as a legitimate target in what it calls its "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and rid it of ultra-nationalists the Kremlin says threaten Russian security.</p> <p>"Pumping (Western) weapons into Ukraine does not change all the parameters of the special operation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on a conference call on Thursday.</p>

"Its goals will be achieved, but this will bring more suffering to Ukraine," said Peskov, responding to a question about whether U.S. plans to sell Ukraine four MQ-1C Gray Eagle drones that can be armed with Hellfire missiles for battlefield use could change the parameters of the conflict.

Four Russian missiles hit railway infrastructure targets in two places in the western Lviv region bordering Poland late on Wednesday, governor Maksym Kozytzkyi said, injuring five people and causing significant damage.

Russia also downed a Ukrainian Su-25 fighter jet in the Mykolaiv region in southern Ukraine, the defence ministry in Moscow said. Reuters could not independently confirm the report.

DONBAS CITY IN FOCUS

Russian forces, backed by heavy artillery, control most of Sievierodonetsk - now largely in ruins - after days of fierce fighting in which they have taken losses, Britain's defence ministry said in its daily intelligence report.

"The enemy is conducting assault operations in the settlement of Sievierodonetsk," Ukraine's armed forces general staff said, adding that Russian forces were also attacking other parts of the east and northeast.

At least four civilians were killed and 10 wounded in the east and northeast, other officials said.

Russia denies targeting civilians.

If Russia fully captures Sievierodonetsk and its smaller twin Lysychansk on the west bank of the Siverskyi Donets river, it would hold all of Luhansk, one of two provinces - with Donetsk - in the Donbas that Moscow claims on behalf of separatists.

Capturing Luhansk would fulfil one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's stated aims and solidify a shift in battlefield momentum after his forces were pushed back from the capital Kyiv and from northern Ukraine.

Donetsk regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said Lysychansk was under constant Russian shelling but remained in Ukrainian hands. Russian forces are also trying to push south towards the Ukraine-held cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, he added.

Britain's defence ministry said Ukrainian forces had destroyed bridges over the river to Lysychansk. It also expected Russian forces to pause after taking Sievierodonetsk before moving its focus towards taking Donetsk.

Zelenskiy told Luxembourg's parliament via videolink on Thursday that Russian forces currently occupy about 20% of all Ukrainian territory and the frontlines of battle stretch more than 1,000 km (620 miles).

GLOBAL IMPACT

The war is having a massive impact on the world economy. Russia has captured some of Ukraine's biggest seaports and its navy controls major transport routes in the Black Sea, blocking Ukrainian shipments and deepening a global food crisis.

Russia and Ukraine together account for nearly a third of global wheat supplies, while Russia is also a key fertilizer exporter and Ukraine a major supplier of corn and sunflower oil.

Ukraine's foreign ministry spokesman, Oleg Nikolenko, said Kyiv was working with international partners to create a U.N.-backed mission to restore Black Sea shipping routes and allow the export of Ukrainian farm produce.

Moscow criticised as "self-destructive" a decision by the European Union this week to cut 90% of oil imports from Russia by the end of 2022, saying the move could destabilise global energy markets. [read more](#)

The conflict has also jolted Europe's security arrangements, prompting Finland and Sweden to seek NATO membership, though NATO member Turkey has blocked that move, accusing Stockholm and Helsinki of harbouring people linked to Kurdish militants.

The issue will be on the agenda when Biden hosts NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg at the White House on Thursday. Stoltenberg told reporters he would soon convene a meeting in Brussels with Swedish, Finnish and Turkish officials to discuss the matter.

In a rare moment of joy for Ukraine, its soccer team advanced towards securing a place in this year's World Cup finals with a 3-1 win over Scotland on Wednesday evening.

"Sometimes you don't need a lot of words! Just pride ... They went out, fought, persevered and won. Because they are Ukrainians!" said Zelenskiy in a message posted on the Telegram app alongside a picture of the players celebrating.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Gas prices above \$4 all states
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/gas-prices-fuel-inflation-joe-biden/2022/06/01/id/1072535/
GIST	<p>For the first time in history, gas prices have topped \$4 in all 50 states.</p> <p>Prices jumped by an average of 48 cents (regular unleaded) during the month of May, leading to a record-high national average of \$4.67 per gallon, according to AAA.</p> <p>Amid this unprecedented surge, all 50 states now report average fuel prices exceeding \$4.00 per gallon, with Oklahoma being the last state to topple the \$4 mark, on average.</p> <p>The state boasting the lowest unleaded gas right now? According to GasBuddy.com ... it's Georgia at \$4.17 per gallon.</p> <p>According to Gas Buddy, which monitors fuel trends in various markets and countries, seven states — Washington (average price: \$5.23), Oregon (\$5.23), Illinois (\$5.24), Alaska (\$5.25), Nevada (\$5.32), Hawaii (\$5.41), and California (\$6.19) — currently report average gas prices at \$5 or higher.</p> <p>Digging deeper, according to the New York Post, a Chevron gas station in Los Angeles currently has unleaded fuel at \$8.05 per gallon.</p> <p>For that particular situation, Chevron says: "This station, along with the majority of our branded stations in California, are owned by independent businesspeople who make their own decisions about the price to charge at their stations."</p> <p>Chevron also cited a number of factors for the surge pricing in California: "Competitive conditions in the marketplace, the higher cost to produce gasoline to the specifications required by the California Air Resources Board, costs associated with fuel distribution, local, state and federal taxes, California carbon-compliance costs, recent inflationary pressures, and fixed costs of doing business."</p> <p>Back in January 2021, the final month of former President Donald Trump's tenure in the White House, the average price of gas was \$2.41 per gallon — with some states even reporting gas at less than \$2 per gallon.</p> <p>Since then, however, fuel prices have skyrocketed in America.</p>

	<p>This current shortage mainly accounts for regular unleaded and premium gasolines; but the diesel supply is also in short stock, according to reports.</p> <p>With the supply seemingly shrinking, and demand going way up, this naturally leads to higher fuel prices.</p> <p>A few weeks ago, Newsmax reported that some gas stations in the Northwest were bracing for fuel prices hovering around the \$10 mark, while others were concerned there wouldn't be a product to sell at the pumps.</p> <p>According to AAA figures, the U.S. incurred a 35-cent increase with unleaded gas prices during April 2022.</p> <p>And for May, the \$4.67 per gallon national average represents a \$1.67 hike — compared to last May's national average of \$3.00 per gallon.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/02 Average gas price hits new record: \$4.71
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/streettalk/opec-u-s-gas-prices-hit-4-71-energy-inflation/2022/06/02/id/1072583/
GIST	<p>The OPEC oil cartel and allied countries including major exporter Russia are weighing how much oil to produce as U.S. gasoline prices hit another record high.</p> <p>Thursday's meeting comes amid speculation that the 23-member alliance, known as OPEC+, may consider breaking from its cautious series of increases and agree to pump more oil starting in July amid fears that high energy prices could slow the global economy. Higher oil and gas prices have contributed to the inflation that is plaguing the U.S. and Europe and sapping consumer purchasing power.</p> <p>The group has been adding a steady 432,000 barrels per day each month, under a road map to gradually restore production cuts made during the depths of the pandemic recession in 2020.</p> <p>OPEC, whose de facto leader is Saudi Arabia, has thus far taken the stance that it can't supply more oil to make up for production lost due to sanctions against Russia. That, along with a European Union agreement to end most oil imports from Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, has helped push prices higher. Gasoline and diesel prices have also been propped up by a lack of refining capacity to turn crude into motor fuel.</p> <p>The U.S. saw a record high average gasoline pump price on Thursday of \$4.71 per gallon, according to AAA. The price of crude makes up about half the price of gasoline at the pump in the U.S., and prices could go even higher as the summer driving season gets under way.</p> <p>High gas prices for drivers are a potential factor in U.S. politics with mid-term Congressional elections approaching later this year.</p> <p>The OPEC+ decision is further complicated by the group's failure to meet its production targets due to underinvestment and other roadblocks in some member countries. Only Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are thought to have spare capacity to produce more oil. But stepping up their production would upset the balance between them and other countries that can't produce and earn more.</p> <p>U.S. oil prices fell 2.8% ahead of the meeting to \$112.01 per barrel while international benchmark Brent crude fell 2.73% to \$113.12 per barrel.</p> <p>Oil prices fell after the Financial Times reported Saudi Arabia could be willing to increase output if Russian supplies falter due to EU sanctions.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/02 Libya slides back toward violence, chaos
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SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-politics-africa-middle-east-libya-2152c50cfa3aea2eb7b1a2182d54a5fa
GIST	<p>CAIRO (AP) — For many Libyans, clashes that erupted in the capital of Tripoli last month were all too familiar — a deja vu of street fighting, reverberating gunfire and people cowering inside their homes. A video circulated online on the day, showing a man shouting from a mosque loudspeaker “Enough war, we want our young generation!”</p> <p>The fighting underscored the fragility of Libya’s relative peace that has prevailed for more than a year but it also looked like history was repeating itself. Now, observers say that momentum to reunify the country has been lost and that its future is looking grim.</p> <p>Once again, there are two competing governments vying for control in Libya, already torn by more than a decade of civil war. The clashes in the capital broke out after one of Libya’s two prime ministers challenged the other by coming to Tripoli, his rival’s seat.</p> <p>Libya has for years been split between rival administrations in the east and the west, each supported by rogue militias and foreign governments. The Mediterranean nation has been in a state of upheaval since the 2011 NATO-backed uprising toppled and later killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi.</p> <p>But a plan had emerged in the past two years that was meant to put the country on the path toward elections. A U.N.-brokered process installed an interim government in early 2021 to shepherd Libyans to elections that were due late last year.</p> <p>That government, led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, briefly unified the political factions under heavy international pressure. But the voting never took place, and since then, the plan has unraveled and left the country in crisis.</p> <p>Lawmakers in Libya’s east-based parliament, headed by influential speaker Aguila Saleh, argued that Dbeibah’s mandate ended when the interim government failed to hold elections.</p> <p>They went ahead and chose Fathi Bashagha, a powerful former interior minister from the western city of Misrata, as new prime minister. Their position gained the endorsement of powerful commander Khalifa Hifter whose forces control the country’s east and most of the south, including major oil facilities.</p> <p>Dbeibah has refused to step down, and factions allied with him in western Libya deeply oppose Hifter. They maintain that Dbeibah, who is also from Misrata with ties to its powerful militias, is working toward holding elections.</p> <p>Analysts are skeptical.</p> <p>Claudia Gazzini, a Libya expert at the International Crisis Group, described the Bashagha-Dbeibah rivalry as “a feud over legitimacy,” with “both governments claiming they are legitimate.”</p> <p>“I don’t think they will be able to hold elections this year,” she said, and also expressed doubts that U.N. attempts to get Libyan parties to reach a constitutional consensus on the elections will make any progress.</p> <p>The power struggle came to a head on May 17, when Bashagha entered Tripoli and attempted to install his government there. He had help from the powerful Nawasi Brigade militia, led by Mustafa Qaddur, deputy head of Libya’s intelligence agency.</p> <p>But Bashagha faced stiff resistance from militias loyal to Dbeibah, leading to hourslong clashes that rocked the city until Bashagha withdrew and a day later set up his government headquarters in the coastal city of Sirte, half way between Libya’s power centers in the east and the west.</p>

The withdrawal emboldened Dbeibah, who promptly sacked Qaddur and another military official, Osama Juwaili, who heads the military intelligence agency. The dismissal of Qaddur was subsequently reversed by the presidential council — an apparent crack within Dbeibah’s camp.

According to an official close to Dbeibah, the Tripoli-based prime minister is convinced Bashagha could not have entered the Libyan capital without “approval or coordination” with Juwaili, a powerful figure from the western city of Zintan, and also Qaddur.

Juwaili’s forces, the official said, manned checkpoints and control areas near Gharyan, a town south of Tripoli, where Bashagha’s convoy passed on its way to the capital. The official spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence details.

Even after Bashagha’s withdrawal, tensions remain high in Tripoli.

Some, like Libya researcher Jalel Harchaoui, believe Bashagha could make another move on Tripoli — or at least attempt to galvanize more support in the area.

“Given the scars that are now out in the open, such a scenario” is entirely possible, he said.

Meanwhile, Libya’s prized light crude is again being used as a tool in the power struggle. Tribal leaders have shut down crucial oil facilities, including the country’s largest oil field in the south controlled by fighters loyal to Hifter, who supports Bashagha.

The oil blockade — which comes as oil prices are skyrocketing because of the war in Ukraine — was likely meant to deprive Debeibah’s government of funds and empower his rival. Bashagha and Saleh have said the facilities would be reopened on condition that oil revenues be temporarily frozen until rival factions agree on a mechanism to distribute oil funds.

The war in Ukraine has distracted the international community but its ripples have been felt in Libya, where Russia has long played an outsized role.

Russia has recognized Bashagha’s government, which Gazzini of the International Crisis Group says makes it difficult for Western countries to also do — so as not to be seen as being on the same side as Russia.

For ordinary Libyans, last month’s deadly violence — one person was killed in the fighting — was a stark reminder of how fragile the relative peace had been.

“Chaos and conflict are their feeding ground,” said Mohammed Abu Salim, in his 30s and a civil servant from Tripoli, referring to Libya’s rival factions.

“If you really believe that those people will allow free and fair elections, then you are delusional.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/02 UK pledges missiles to Ukraine
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-government-and-politics-moscow-61ef29e1911bf2e38a19a6110e764e09
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Britain pledged Thursday to send sophisticated medium-range rocket systems to Ukraine, joining the United States and Germany in equipping the embattled nation with advanced weapons for shooting down aircraft and knocking out artillery.</p> <p>Western arms have been critical to Ukraine’s success in stymieing Russia’s much larger and better-equipped military during a war now in its 99th day. But as Russian forces closed in on a key city in recent days, the Ukrainian government said its fighters needed better rocket launchers to prevail.</p>

	<p>Russian forces continued to pound towns and cities overnight and to tighten their grip on the eastern city of Sievierodonetsk. The U.K. Defense Ministry reported that Russia had captured most of the city, one of two in Luhansk province that had remained under Ukrainian control.</p> <p>British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said the U.K. would send an unspecified number of M270 launchers, which can fire precision-guided rockets up to 80 kilometers (50 miles). Ukrainian troops will be trained in the U.K. to use the equipment, he said.</p> <p>The British government says the decision to provide the launchers was coordinated closely with the U.S. government, which said Wednesday that it would supply High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems to Ukraine.</p> <p>The two missile systems are similar, though the American one has wheels while the British one -- also U.S.-built -- runs on tracks.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has pleaded for more and better weapons and sometimes accused the West of moving too slowly in providing them. After Western-supplied arms helped Ukraine fend off Russian attempts to storm the capital, Moscow shifted its focus to seizing all of eastern Ukraine's industrial Donbas region.</p> <p>Military analysts think Russia is hoping to overrun the Donbas before any weapons that might turn the tide arrive. It will take at least three weeks to get the precision U.S. weapons and trained troops onto the battlefield, the Pentagon said. But Defense Undersecretary Colin Kahl said he believes they will arrive in time to make a difference in the fight.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 Income tax collections historic levels
SOURCE	https://rollcall.com/2022/06/01/unexplained-tax-revenue-growth-vexes-budget-scorekeepers/
GIST	<p>ANALYSIS — The term “unexplained” doesn’t appear too often in official government documents, unless they are dealing with possible paranormal events, like UFOs. Yet the reference is sprinkled throughout the Congressional Budget Office’s latest budget and economic outlook to describe the recent strength in federal tax receipts that’s blown away prior estimates.</p> <p>Individual income tax collections for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30 are projected to land at their highest level as a share of the U.S. economy since the advent of the income tax in 1913. Overall federal tax revenue this year is expected to hit 19.6 percent of gross domestic product, a figure that’s been topped only three times: twice during World War II and again in 2000, before the dot-com bubble burst.</p> <p>It’s not entirely unexplained; the CBO attributes much of the revenue growth this year and in the coming years to faster economic growth, higher wages and profits and capital gains realizations from elevated asset prices — and, yes, higher inflation.</p> <p>Additional revenue comes from one-time measures like payroll taxes deferred during the pandemic that are now coming due, and from changes in estimations of foreign corporate profits in tax havens and low-tax jurisdictions.</p> <p>“The remaining growth in individual income taxes this year cannot yet be explained,” the report says in one instance. “Corporate tax collections were larger in 2021 and early 2022 than can be fully explained by currently available data on business activity for those years,” the CBO says later in the document.</p> <p>Tax receipts aren’t going to stay that high forever. The report estimates that revenue as a share of GDP will drop to 17.6 percent in fiscal 2025, the last year that major expiring provisions of the 2017 tax cuts are still in effect. That would still be higher than the average of the past five decades, the CBO said.</p> <p>‘Economic,’ ‘technical’ factors</p>

To put the current windfall in perspective, it's useful to look at some comparisons to estimates made before key legislative policies were proposed or enacted.

For the fiscal 2022 through 2031 period, the CBO estimates that tax receipts will come in \$3.4 trillion higher than expected the last time the agency published its semiannual forecast, in July 2021. Compare that with the budget reconciliation package House Democrats passed last November — known as “Build Back Better” — estimated to raise taxes by about \$1.5 trillion.

In 2017, prior to passage of the GOP tax law, the CBO estimated that federal tax receipts would total \$43 trillion over fiscal 2018 through 2027. Combining actual results in the early years after enactment with the latest forecast, tax revenue is now expected to be \$1.7 trillion higher during that time than the agency had forecast before the tax cuts became law.

That's due to higher individual income and payroll tax receipts, which offset a \$146 billion drop in corporate tax revenue. But some of that decline was pandemic-related, and from fiscal 2021 through 2027, the latest CBO figures show corporate receipts outpacing the pre-2017 tax law forecast by a combined \$255 billion.

Back out the last two years of that budget window when major pieces of the tax law are set to expire, and total revenue is still on pace to come in \$1 trillion higher than the June 2017 forecast for those eight years.

The new figures reflect a big swing from last July, when the CBO's forecast indicated overall tax revenue would fall about \$127 billion short of pre-2017 tax cut estimates over a decade; even that was a positive surprise, given earlier warnings.

None of this is to say “tax cuts pay for themselves,” an argument some tax-cutters have made. It's altogether possible, even probable, that receipts would have been higher in the absence of the GOP tax cuts.

But since we'll never know, it's useful to see the power of “economic and technical” revisions to their forecasts, as the CBO calls them. And those factors appear all the more powerful in light of subsequent legislation that reduced revenues, as well as a global pandemic that led to a brief recession and temporarily sapped tax receipts.

Of course, the CBO's forecast doesn't take into account what's expected to occur in later years: extension of large chunks of those 2017 tax cuts, since letting them all lapse would mean tax increases for millions of lower- and middle-income households.

That could cost \$2 trillion or more to extend through fiscal 2032, the CBO said, though that's a “static” estimate that doesn't factor in potential changes in the economy. Letting the provisions lapse would “temporarily slow economic growth,” according to the CBO, so it stands to reason that extending them would boost growth and lessen the revenue hit somewhat.

Taxes are just one side of the federal budget ledger, but the recent strength in receipts has been a positive upside surprise, at least temporarily, for one of the biggest long-term debt drivers: Medicare. Greater-than-expected payroll taxes due to faster wage growth have pushed back the date of the Medicare hospital insurance trust fund's exhaustion by three years, to 2030.

Taxes are just one side of the federal budget ledger, but the recent strength in receipts has been a positive upside surprise, at least temporarily, for one of the biggest long-term debt drivers: Medicare. Greater-than-expected payroll taxes due to faster wage growth have pushed back the date of the Medicare hospital insurance trust fund's exhaustion by three years, to 2030.

Big spending deals

Nonetheless, federal spending has grown substantially since the CBO's summer 2017 forecast. Major contributors include discretionary spending deals that have undone tight spending caps imposed a decade ago, pandemic relief laws enacted since March 2020, and the five-year infrastructure spending law enacted last year.

Spending over the fiscal 2018 through 2027 time frame is up \$6.4 trillion — and that's a net figure that includes an \$842 billion reduction in expected interest payments on the federal debt due to lower interest rates. Spending on everything besides interest payments is up by \$7.3 trillion.

Combined with \$1.7 trillion in higher tax revenue, deficits are about \$4.7 trillion higher over the fiscal 2018 through 2027 period, pushing debt held by the public to an estimated \$30.2 trillion at the end of that decade.

The size of the economy is expected to be over \$2 trillion greater by then, which offsets some of the rise in debt as a share of GDP. But debt would still hit 100 percent of GDP by 2027 — up from 91 percent of GDP in the June 2017 forecast.

The Federal Reserve's role in the Treasury debt market is a big one, however, and particularly since COVID-19 washed ashore in early 2020. Despite the Fed's pending move to shrink its balance sheet as part of its battle against inflation, the CBO expects it to begin buying up Treasury debt again in several years.

If we assume the Fed's pre-pandemic \$2.4 trillion pile of Treasuries remained in place in fiscal 2027, the amount owed to private and foreign creditors would equal about 82 percent of GDP in the CBO's June 2017 forecast.

Fast forward to last week's updated forecast, which assumes that the Fed's Treasury holdings hit \$3.9 trillion in fiscal 2027, when total private credit market exposure would amount to 87 percent of GDP. That's still higher than assumed in 2017, before so many major fiscal events occurred, but not by as much.

Some of the CBO's spending assumptions probably aren't realistic. By law, the agency has to assume that emergency spending on things like the war in Ukraine go on in perpetuity. It also assumes Congress will reauthorize the infrastructure law at similarly high levels after its major provisions expire; it's not clear what lawmakers' appetite will be for another massive infrastructure deal like the \$830 billion the CBO estimates Congress plunked down last year.

Still, with tax-cut extensions likely on the horizon, it stands to reason that deficits and debt could be greater than the CBO currently estimates. And the long-term picture isn't pretty regardless, with an aging population and no answer for rising health care costs. But as we've seen over the past year, there's always the chance for some kind of "unexplained" intervention that upends the conventional wisdom about the federal budget picture.

Debt limit

One final piece of good news in the CBO report, depending on where one sits politically: The revenue surge might push off the moment when lawmakers absolutely must deal with the statutory debt ceiling or Treasury will have to risk not making good on its obligations.

The CBO forecast has debt subject to limit, which encompasses "intragovernmental" debt owed to federal trust funds as well as debt held by the public, hitting nearly \$31.8 trillion by the end of the next fiscal year, Sept. 30, 2023. That means that sometime in the middle of next year, Treasury could hit the current debt limit, which is just shy of \$31.4 trillion.

But there are always "extraordinary measures," such as suspending certain trust funds' investments, as well as elevated cash balances that could be drained, all of which could push the moment of truth off to late 2023, conceivably. Given that Republicans appear likely to control one or both chambers next year, an

	extended runway for the GOP and President Joe Biden to hammer out a solution might be the safest thing for the economy and global financial markets.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 WHO: monkeypox spreading undetected
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2022/06/01/who-says-monkeypox-has-been-spreading-undetected-as-global-cases-rise-to-more-than-550.html
GIST	<p>The World Health Organization on Wednesday confirmed more than 550 monkeypox cases across 30 countries as the virus continues to spread across the globe.</p> <p>WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the sudden appearance of monkeypox in multiple countries across the world indicates the virus has been spreading undetected for some time outside the West and Central African nations where it is usually found.</p> <p>The virus may have been transmitted for months or years undetected though investigations are ongoing and there are clear no answers yet, according to Dr. Rosamund Lewis, the WHO's monkeypox technical lead.</p> <p>"We don't really know whether it's too late to contain. What WHO and all member states are trying to do is prevent onward spread," Lewis said during a news conference in Geneva on Wednesday. Contact tracing and isolating patients who have monkeypox are crucial to stopping the spread, she said.</p> <p>Tedros said most of the cases have been reported by men who sought care at sexual health clinics after they've had sex with other men and developed symptoms. He emphasized that anyone can catch monkeypox through close physical contact, warned against stigmatizing people and called on countries to increase surveillance to identify cases in the broader population.</p> <p>Monkeypox symptoms generally resolve on their own, Tedros said, though the disease can be severe in some cases. No deaths have been reported from the current outbreaks in North America and Europe. However, monkeypox has also not spread yet among more vulnerable populations such as pregnant women and children in these regions, said Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's Covid-19 technical lead.</p> <p>However, the WHO has been monitoring monkeypox in Africa for five decades and deaths are reported on the continent every year, Lewis said. More than 70 deaths from monkeypox have been reported across five African countries in 2022, she said. Monkeypox cases have been increasing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in recent years which may be because vaccination against smallpox was halted in 1980. Monkeypox is in the same virus family as smallpox though it is milder.</p> <p>"Collective immunity in the human population since that time is not what it was at the time of smallpox eradication," Lewis said. "Anyone under the age of 40 or 50 depending on which country you were born in or where you might have received your vaccine against smallpox would not now have that protection from that particular vaccine."</p> <p>The WHO and member countries have maintained smallpox vaccine reserves, though they are mostly first generation shots that do not meet current standards, Lewis said. There are also newer-generation vaccines and treatments for smallpox but the supply is limited. The WHO is working with companies to increase access to those new vaccines and treatments, she said.</p> <p>"The WHO is not recommending mass vaccination. There is no need for mass vaccination," Lewis said. Right now the virus is mostly spreading in a specific community, men who have sex with men, and it's important to provide individuals in that community with the information they need to protect themselves and prevent the virus from spreading, she said.</p> <p>The largest monkeypox outbreaks outside Africa are in Europe, particularly the United Kingdom, Spain and Portugal. The U.S. has reported at least 15 cases across nine states.</p>

	Monkeypox usually begins with symptoms similar to the flu, including fever, headache, muscle aches, chills, exhaustion and swollen lymph nodes. Infectious lesions then form on the body. Monkeypox is primarily spread through sustained skin-to-skin contact with these lesions. A person is considered no longer contagious once the lesions have disappeared and a new layer of skin has formed.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 Putin's coffers swelling despite sanctions
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2022-06-02/putin-s-coffers-are-swelling-despite-sanctions
GIST	<p>As the war in Ukraine approaches its 100th day, sanctions are failing to stop Russia's public finances from swelling.</p> <p>Though it may be a pariah across the developed world — with corporate giants having fled and the economy heading for a deep recession — the war machine remains very much operational. Soaring energy and commodity prices are creating a flood of cash that could average \$800 million a day this year. That will be a major concern for the EU, as it continues to struggle with securing agreement on a sixth package of sanctions, which cover crude oil imports.</p> <p>Hungary raised new or already rejected demands, sinking a push to clinch a deal yesterday.</p> <p>EU ambassadors may meet again today. Still, the EU is trying to coordinate a ban on providing the insurance services needed to ship Russian oil anywhere in the world with some Group of Seven members, including the UK. That would make it harder for Putin to restock his war chest.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/02 US, Germany advanced weapons to Ukraine
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kyiv-technology-4f8e7d017b5fd67d80fb42d23b27b3c1
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The U.S. and Germany pledged Wednesday to equip Ukraine with some of the advanced weapons it has long desired for shooting down aircraft and knocking out artillery, as Russian forces closed in on capturing a key city in the east.</p> <p>Germany said it will supply Ukraine with up-to-date anti-aircraft missiles and radar systems, while the U.S. announced it will provide four sophisticated, medium-range rocket systems and ammunition.</p> <p>The U.S. is trying to help Ukraine fend off the Russians without triggering a wider war in Europe. The Pentagon said it received assurances that Ukraine will not fire the new rockets into Russian territory.</p> <p>The Kremlin accused the U.S. of “pouring fuel on the fire.”</p> <p>Western arms have been critical to Ukraine's success in stymieing Russia's much larger and better-equipped military, thwarting its effort to storm the capital and forcing Moscow to shift its focus to the industrial Donbas region in the east.</p> <p>But as Russia bombards towns in its inching advance in the east, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly pleaded for more and better weapons and accused the West of moving too slowly.</p> <p>Andriy Yermak, the head of the Ukrainian president's office, hailed the new Western weapons.</p> <p>“I'm sure that if we receive all the necessary weapons and strengthen the efficient sanctions regime we will win,” he said.</p> <p>The new arms could help Ukraine set up and hold new lines of defense in the east by hitting back at Russian artillery pieces that have been battering towns and cities and by limiting Russian airstrikes, said</p>

retired French Gen. Dominique Trinquand, a former head of France's military mission at the United Nations.

"The NATO countries — the European nations and the Americans — have progressively escalated the means that they are putting at Ukraine's disposal, and this escalation, in my opinion, has had the aim of testing Russian limits," he said. "Each time, they measure the Russian reaction, and since there is no reaction, they keep supplying increasingly effective and sophisticated weaponry."

Military analysts say Russia is hoping to overrun the Donbas before any weapons that might turn the tide arrive. It will take at least three weeks to get the precision U.S. weapons and trained troops onto the battlefield, the Pentagon said. But Defense Undersecretary Colin Kahl said he believes they will arrive in time to make a difference in the fight.

The rocket systems are part of a new \$700 million package of security assistance for Ukraine from the U.S. that also includes helicopters, Javelin anti-tank weapon systems, radars, tactical vehicles, spare parts and more.

The rockets have a range of about 50 miles (80 kilometers) and are highly mobile. Ukraine had pushed unsuccessfully for rockets with a range of up to 186 miles (300 kilometers).

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow does not trust assurances that Ukraine will not fire on Russian territory. "We believe that the U.S. is deliberately and diligently pouring fuel on the fire," he said.

Col. Gen. Mikhail Mizintzev later went further, directly accusing Ukraine of planning to fire U.S.-provided missiles from the northeastern Sumy region at border areas in Russia. The claim, which he said was based on radio intercepts, couldn't be independently confirmed.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Ukraine's push for more weapons is a "direct provocation intended to draw the West into the fighting." He warned that the multiple rocket launchers would raise the risk of an expanded conflict.

"Sane Western politicians understand those risks well," he said.

As the new weapons shipments were announced, a Russian missile hit rail lines in the western Lviv region, a key conduit for supplies of Western weapons and other supplies, officials said. Regional Gov. Maksym Kozytskyi said five people were wounded in Wednesday's strike, and the head of Ukrainian railways said the damage was still being assessed.

Germany's promise of IRIS-T air defense systems would mark the first delivery of long-range air defense weapons to Ukraine since the start of the war. Earlier deliveries of portable, shoulder-fired air defense missiles have bolstered the Ukrainian military's ability to take down helicopters and other low-flying aircraft but didn't give it enough range to challenge Russia's air superiority.

Germany has come under particular criticism, both at home and from allies abroad, that it isn't doing enough. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told lawmakers that the IRIS-T's surface-to-air missiles are the most modern air defense system the country has.

"With this, we will enable Ukraine to defend an entire city from Russian air attacks," he said. The radar systems will also help Ukraine locate enemy artillery.

A regional governor said Russian forces now control 80% of Sievierodonetsk, a city that is key to Moscow's efforts to complete its capture of the Donbas, where Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed separatists have fought for years and where the separatists held swaths of territory even before the invasion.

Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai said Russian troops were advancing in the city during fierce street battles with Ukrainian forces, though he noted that in some districts the Ukrainian troops managed to push them back.

The only other city in Luhansk that the Russians have not yet captured, Lysychansk, is still fully under Ukrainian control, he said, but is likely to be the next target. The two cities are separated by a river.

“If the Russians manage to take full control over Sievierodonetsk within two to three days, they will start installing artillery and mortars and will shell Lysychansk more intensively,” Haidai said.

Zelenskyy, meanwhile, said the country is losing between 60 and 100 soldiers a day in the fighting.

He turned the focus to children in his nightly video address, saying 243 of them have been killed in the war, 446 have been wounded and 139 are missing. The real numbers could be higher, he added, as his government doesn’t have a full picture of areas under Russian occupation.

Zelenskyy also said 200,000 children are among the Ukrainians who have been forcefully taken to Russia and dispersed across that vast country: “The purpose of this criminal policy is not just to steal people but to make those who are deported forget about Ukraine and unable to return.”

In southern Ukraine, a regional governor sounded a more positive note, saying Russian troops were retreating and blowing up bridges behind them.

“They are afraid of a counterattack by the Ukrainian army,” Vitaliy Kim, governor of the Mykolayiv region, said on the Telegram messaging app.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Ukraine 2-out-of-3 children displaced
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-children-displaced-100-days-war/
GIST	<p><i>United Nations</i> – Over five million children are now in need of humanitarian assistance because of the war in Ukraine, with "consequences for children at a scale and speed not seen since World War II," the United Nations' children's agency, UNICEF, said Tuesday.</p> <p>"Almost two out of every three children have been displaced by fighting," UNICEF said in a statement. 3 million children inside Ukraine and over 2.2 million children in refugee-hosting countries are now in need of humanitarian assistance, and at least 262 children have been killed and 415 have been injured.</p> <p>"It is one of the largest and fastest [displacement crises] in recent memory," Christopher Tidey, UNICEF's Emergency Communication Specialist, told CBS News.</p> <p>The grim assessment came as the Biden administration announced details of a new \$700 million security package it is sending to Ukraine.</p> <p>The essential needs of children and civilians generally – to get drinkable water and food – are also the focus of U.S. and U.N. leaders, who are working through intense negotiations to try to access vital grains and other foodstuffs that are trapped in Ukraine due to Russia's blockade of the country's Black Sea shipping ports.</p> <p>Russia and Ukraine account for one-third of the world's wheat exports, so the disruption of exports is also creating food shortages in famine-wracked nations and higher prices for basic commodities around the world.</p> <p>On Wednesday, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield responded to a CBS News question at a press briefing, on what is happening to get Ukrainian wheat exports out of blocked ports.</p>

"I'm told that there is about 25 million tons of grain that is available to be transported and provided to humanitarian programs, as well as to those who are dependent on Ukrainian wheat," Thomas-Greenfield said. "All of the efforts that are being led by the Secretary-General and others to figure out how to provide for humanitarian quarters, how to provide for the removal of mines and how to move forward on a ceasefire that would allow this essential food to get out to people in need is going to be a gargantuan effort," she said.

Friday marks 100 days since Russia invaded Ukraine, and U.N. agencies are straining under the scale of the need for humanitarian assistance the war has created.

Most of the children were killed or injured "in attacks using explosive weapons in populated areas," UNICEF said.

Russia has targeted civilian infrastructure, including at least 256 health facilities and one in six UNICEF-supported 'Safe Schools' in the country's east. Hundreds of other schools across the country have been leveled.

The war has caused an acute child protection crisis, including family separation, violence, abuse, sexual exploitation, and trafficking. Some children have been forcibly deported to Russia, "where children are placed in foster care or adopted in violation of international humanitarian law," Ukraine's U.N. Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya told CBS News.

"Without an urgent ceasefire and negotiated peace, children will continue to suffer – and fallout from the war will impact vulnerable children around the world," UNICEF's Executive Director Catherine Russell said.

UNICEF says that most of the children exposed to the war "need safety, stability, child protection services, and psychosocial support... and UNICEF continues to call for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine and to protect all children from harm."

"More than anything, they need peace," UNICEF said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 California amid worst drought in 1,200yrs
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/water-cutbacks-california-6-million-people-drought/
GIST	<p>Southern California is imposing mandatory water cutbacks as the state tries to cope with the driest conditions it has faced in recorded history. Starting Wednesday, about 6 million people in parts of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Ventura counties are limited to watering outdoor plants once a week — an unprecedented move for the region.</p> <p>The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which supplies water to about 19 million people, declared a water shortage emergency in April and voted unanimously to curtail water use, either by restricting outdoor watering or by other means.</p> <p>"Metropolitan has never before employed this type of restriction on outdoor water use. But we are facing unprecedented reductions in our Northern California supplies, and we have to respond with unprecedented measures," Adel Hagekhalil, the district's general manager, said in a statement. "We're adapting to climate change in real time."</p> <p>Nearly all of California is experiencing severe, extreme or exceptional drought. Very little rain fell in January, February and March, when the state typically receives half its annual precipitation. As a result, the state is facing its driest ever start to the year, with one recent study calling the current drought the worst in 1,200 years.</p>

Governor Gavin Newsom last week [called](#) on Californians to reduce their consumption, saying, "Every water agency across the state needs to take more aggressive actions" to save water.

The Metropolitan Water District has imposed its harshest restrictions on Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Ventura counties, which depend on the State Water Project, a distribution network that brings water from Northern California to the state's southern region. During the ongoing drought, the SWP delivered [just 5%](#) of the water local municipalities had requested.

Areas of California that depend on the Colorado River for water have so far been spared conservation measures, although water levels in the river are also [unusually low](#).

"Wasteful" lawns

The Metropolitan Water District is a wholesaler with 26 member agencies covering nearly 80 [cities](#) and communities in the state. Those smaller agencies are tasked with enforcing water conservation plans and charge stiff fines if localities go over their allocations.

Local agencies that fail to meet the state's reduction goals are fined up to [\\$2,000 per acre-foot of water](#). An acre-foot is about 326,00 gallons. The district will monitor water usage, and if the restrictions don't work it could order a total ban on outdoor watering in the affected areas as soon as September.

Most utilities have focused cutbacks on outdoor watering, which is responsible for about half of a city's water use. In parts of Los Angeles, for instance, residents are limited to two 8-minute periods of outdoor watering per week, with specific days based on their address, the LA Times [reported](#).

"Using our precious water resources to irrigate thirsty grass that serves no function is wasteful, particularly during this severe drought," Hagekhalil said in a statement. "Our priority must be to preserve and stretch our limited supplies to ensure we have enough water to meet human health and safety needs."

An exception to the rules allows for hand-watering trees to maintain "ecologically important tree canopies," the district noted.

The state is also encouraging residents to [replace](#) water-guzzling lawns with native California vegetation or rock gardens that are more resistant to drought.

Drier conditions across the U.S. West are also increasing the [risk of blackouts](#) in different regions this summer, the nation's electricity regulator said last month. Lower-than-normal water levels in reservoirs mean that California will produce just half the hydroelectric power of a typical year, the Energy Department [warned](#) on Wednesday.

This summer is also expected to be hotter than normal, which would create higher demand for air conditioning and strain the power grid further. Drought conditions also helped cause the ["Coastal Fire,"](#) which broke out near Laguna Nigel on May 11 and destroyed 20 homes, the Drought Monitor said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Seattle police crisis worsens; more leave
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3501228/rantz-seattle-police-staff-crisis-exodus-200/
GIST	<p>The Seattle Police Department is on track to lose nearly 200 officers by the end of the year. The latest data on officer separations versus recruitment shows the crisis has no end in sight.</p> <p>A spokesperson with the SPD says the city lost 67 officers this year, leaving the department with just 838 officers. But the separation data is based on staffing levels through May 20, with official numbers that reflect all of May to be released next week. Multiple sources tell me the SPD lost 13 officers in May, bringing the year-to-date total to 75.</p>

Historically, the department has seen a surge in separations in June and July, indicating the worst is yet to come.

“These numbers indicate an alarming situation, that if we don’t focus on retaining the current qualified officers from leaving, we’re in deep, deep trouble,” Seattle Police Officers Guild president Mike Solan exclusively tells the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. “Because there’s no way we’ll be able to recruit qualified people to want to even come here. And the numbers are indicative of that. And we’re very, very concerned moving forward.”

Recruitment failing, too

Solan is likely correct in his assessment of the city’s recruitment efforts.

The SPD, through a spokesperson, confirmed their preliminary reports show only 22 hires and re-hires (officers who quit the SPD but returned) through May 20. A source tells me that number will be 26 once all of May is counted. This falls far short of the city’s goal of hiring 125 by the end of the year, for a department with a total goal of 1,400 officers.

The City Council did an about-face, thanks to efforts by City Councilmember Sara Nelson and Mayor Bruce Harrell. Both newcomers championed an incentive package to recruit officers to the SPD. Many on the Council, which previously defunded and demonized police, adopted a new tone when discussing police recruitment and retention challenges.

After Seattle voters installed the mayoral candidate who promised to support the police, and a Republican City Attorney who vowed to tackle the surge in crime, councilmembers like Lisa Herbold and Dan Strauss moved to be more generally supportive of the police they once virulently criticized.

Efforts are not good enough

Solan called the incentive plan a “positive” move by the Council, but said it’s not going to be enough.

“It all stems from the lack of political support from our elected leaders. We’re out and from the union angle, yes, our interest is trying to get a contract for the current people, and the future police officers to compare with cost of living and be the highest paid in the state,” Solan explained. “And for you to stop the bleed, meaning the city, of losing these highly qualified and skilled trained officers, well you do that, number one, by incentivizing them to stay. Right now, we’re not seeing that take shape. And they’re focusing on the wrong piece of this, which is just recruiting.”

Solan notes the SPD is competing with nearby agencies offering commensurate pay and benefits, along with city leaders who have not consistently sided with activists chanting, “All cops are b*stards” at rallies — and riots.

The staffing numbers are still misleading

Despite the record-high exodus, the dismal numbers are worse than they appear.

As of June 1, there were at least 130 officers on the HR Unavailable list. This list includes officers who are on paid and unpaid leave, worker’s comp, extended leave due to military service, and unvaccinated officers that the city hasn’t yet terminated. This means an even further strain has been placed on the department.

Staffing is so low that precincts routinely beg for volunteers to take on extra shifts so that they can meet minimum staffing levels. Still, precincts across all watches are not meeting staffing goals, putting the public and officers at risk.

Specialty units within the department are struggling, too.

	<p>The SPD lost 100 detectives since 2019, leaving the city with just 134. Consequently, the SPD stopped assigning adult sexual assault cases to detectives. As alarming, SPD's Special Assault and Child Abuse Unit went from 12 detectives three years ago to just four.</p> <p>No end in sight</p> <p>There's no apparent end in sight to the city's staffing woes. It's directly tied to the surge of crime hitting Seattle and the region.</p> <p>Solan and SPOG project the separations in 2022 to hit 181, based on the current trajectory and the upcoming retirements the SPD knows are coming. This means it will take even longer for officers to respond to 911 calls.</p> <p>"We've already lost 75. I don't even know how we absorb that. I don't speak for the agency, I speak for the union, but I don't know how the agency absorbs that. And quite frankly, I don't know how the union absorbs that," Solan explained. "I don't know how our community absorbs that because they're desperate for uniformed police officers to answer their 911 call for help. You're never going to get those kinds of [recruitment] numbers to replace them in a reasonable amount of time. This will take years to recover from."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Pride parades ban police participation
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/courts/police-banned-from-participating-in-more-pride-parades-across-the-country
GIST	<p>Organizers of Pride parades across the United States are prohibiting uniformed police officers from actively participating in events as the relationship between law enforcement officers and the LGBT community continues to deteriorate.</p> <p>The Pride parade had welcomed police officers for years, but following nationwide protests stemming from the 2020 death of George Floyd, as well as other instances of police brutality, some organizers have argued that a law enforcement presence would be a trigger for the LGBT community, as well as people of color who have experienced inequality and violence at the hands of police for decades.</p> <p>Some organizers have also cited the 1969 Stonewall Riots, an incident in which police raided a gay club in New York City and patrons fought back, as another reason to keep the police out. The incident is believed to have sparked the modern gay rights movement.</p> <p>Last year, New York Pride organizers barred gay and lesbian police officers from marching until 2025. The move was met with condemnation from public officials who accused the group, which prides itself on inclusion, of being hypocrites. This year, the NYPD is also prohibited from protecting those attending the festivities and will be relegated to policing the perimeter from a block away. New York City Mayor Eric Adams condemned the NYC Pride's policy of prohibiting police officers from marching in uniform but stopped short of saying whether he'd attend the popular event.</p> <p>"Mayor Adams supports inclusivity and allowing all New Yorkers to be true to who they are," Fabien Levy, a spokesman for the mayor's office said. "Banning officers from wearing their uniforms at Pride is disappointing and contradicts our freedom of expression. That's one of the many reasons why he has long supported and fought for LGBTQ+ officers to be able to wear their uniforms at the Pride parade. He will continue to do the same before next month's parade."</p> <p>New York City's Pride parade will be held on June 26.</p> <p>In San Francisco, police officers will also be barred from wearing their uniforms in the city's march, one of the biggest Pride celebrations in the world. Instead, they have been told to march in T-shirts that represent their local law enforcement agency.</p>

The relationship between San Francisco police and members of the LGBT community reached a boiling point in 2019 when a protest on the parade route ended with people being arrested, as well as being allegedly shoved and injured by the police.

For some in the community, having "police in the parade is difficult for them," San Francisco Pride Director Suzanne Ford said. "So we want to honor and make sure that we protect and make people feel safe."

The [Albuquerque](#), New Mexico, Pride Board voted almost unanimously in April to ban the city's police from having a booth at this year's PrideFest. However, the board said it may revisit the topic next year if "lines of communication have been open and the community feedback has been positive."

In [Seattle](#), organizers of the annual PrideFest bash have also asked police to steer clear of festivities this year. The event takes place at the end of the Seattle Pride parade route. However, unlike San Francisco and New York, Seattle Pride will still allow officers to participate in the parade.

After banning police from festivities in 2021, Denver's Pride organizers had a change of heart this year.

The Center on Colfax, which serves as the organizer for the city's PrideFest events, will now allow police officers and first responders who identify as members of the LGBT community to participate and will form a "marching contingent" for the parade. Last year, the Denver-based nonprofit group, which operates as an LGBT community center, said the decision to exclude law enforcement was in solidarity against "police violence aimed at the black community."

Rex Fuller, CEO of the Center on Colfax, acknowledged that last year's decision was "very controversial and very hurtful to a number of people in the community, most specifically LGBT police officers."

"We've tried to include as many opinions as we can, and we've tried to come to the best compromise that we can," he told Denver7.

Other cities have also had a hard time trying to implement the no-police rule.

Sacramento, St. Louis, and Minneapolis have all tried to exclude the law enforcement community but ultimately reverted to their former policies.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/02 Shanghai bans media use term 'lockdown'?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/02/shanghai-reportedly-bans-media-use-lockdown-china
GIST	<p>Authorities in Shanghai have reportedly ordered the media to refrain from using the term "lockdown" while reporting on the end of the city's two-month lockdown.</p> <p>This week the Chinese city of 25 million people reopened, allowing most to leave their homes, go to work, and use public transport after more than 60 days inside. On Thursday, according to leaked directives from the city, Chinese media were told to disseminate information about the changes to restrictions, but ordered not to use the phrase "ending the lockdown".</p> <p>"Unlike Wuhan, Shanghai never declared a lockdown, so there is no 'ending the lockdown'," said censorship directives issued to media on Tuesday, and leaked to the China Digital Times.</p> <p>"All parts of Shanghai underwent static management-style suppression and suspensions, but the city's core functions kept operating throughout this period. Emphasise that related measures were temporary, conditional, and limited."</p> <p>China Digital Times cautioned that such directives are sometimes delivered to publishers orally, and so the wording may not be exact. The Guardian has not independently verified the document.</p>

For more than two months Shanghai residents had been [largely confined to their apartments or residential communities](#), or taken to centralised quarantine centres, often for simply living in the same building as a case. The early weeks of the lockdown were beset by food shortages and problems in accessing medical care. Businesses and factories which did not shut down had to operate in “closed loop” systems, often with staff living on site.

On Thursday, curbs were lifted for about 22.5 million people in low-risk areas. Residents must still wear masks in public and avoid gatherings, and restaurant dining remains banned. Shops can operate at 75% capacity, while gyms will reopen at a later date.

The lifting of the restrictions came as authorities declared the outbreak to be “effectively controlled”, but the directives also urged media to stress that the eased measures were “conditional”.

“It is by no means the case that every person in every district across the whole city will be able to freely head out at once, nor that this is a uniform relaxation,” it said.

On Thursday, a Shanghai-based journalist, Thomas Yau, reported his neighbourhood had already gone back into lockdown because of a single case walking down the street.

The chaos of Shanghai’s lockdown sparked major criticism of China’s commitment to a zero-Covid policy, and was a source of embarrassment for Shanghai’s authorities who had tried to avoid one. The resource-intensive policy had been effective throughout the pandemic, but the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant challenged the usual methods of health surveillance, mass testing, and targeted or regional lockdowns.

Despite the challenges, China’s leadership remains committed to the policy. Districts of Beijing were also put under lockdown, or ordered to work from home, while the city also enacted broad public transport shutdowns and other curbs on movement which began to lift last week.

Several cities and provinces have launched “routinised” testing regimes, requiring a regular negative PCR test – ranging from every two to seven days - in return for freedom of movement. Some areas require the test weekly. In Shanghai, people must test negative every 72 hours, and those testing positive, and their close contacts, face onerous quarantines.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Denmark votes to join EU defense policy
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/01/denmark-votes-on-joining-eus-common-defence-policy
GIST	<p>Denmark has voted overwhelmingly to join the EU’s common defence policy, becoming the last of the bloc’s members to sign up, as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine continues to reshape Europe’s security landscape.</p> <p>The referendum on Wednesday, in which voters backed the government’s proposal by 66.9% to 33.1%, followed historic applications by Denmark’s previously non-aligned Nordic neighbours, Finland and Sweden, to join Nato last month.</p> <p>Denmark, historically critical of the EU, secured exemptions from joining the common security and defence policy (CSDP) and the euro in a 1993 referendum, but the country’s prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, said it was time to change tack.</p> <p>“Tonight Denmark has sent a very important signal. To our allies in Europe and Nato, and to Putin,” she told cheering supporters on Wednesday evening after the result was published.</p> <p>“We’re showing that when Putin invades a free country and threatens stability in Europe, we others pull together.</p>

“Denmark now can partake in the European cooperation on defence and security. And for that I’m very, very happy.”

Frederiksen called the referendum barely two weeks after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, after reaching an agreement with a majority of parties in the Danish parliament, and pledged to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP, in line with Nato membership requirements, by 2033.

“Nato will of course remain our most important tool, but the EU gives us another in securing our defence in the east,” the ruling Social Democrats’ defence spokesperson, Mogens Jensen, said. Eleven of Denmark’s 14 parties, representing more than three-quarters of seats in parliament, had urged voters to drop the opt-out.

“The world is changing, and not in a good way. We need to stand together and strengthen the cooperation that strengthens our security,” said Jakob Ellemann-Jensen, head of the opposition Liberal party.

Participation in the EU’s defence policy will allow Denmark, a founding Nato member, to take part in joint EU military operations, such as those in Bosnia, Mali and Somalia, and will allow Danish officials to stay in the room when EU colleagues discuss defence issues.

EU leaders Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel welcomed the result.

Denmark’s decision was a “strong message of commitment to our common security”, Von der Leyen tweeted, saying Denmark and the European Union would benefit.

“This decision will benefit Europe and make both the EU and the Danish people safer and stronger,” Michel wrote on Twitter.

It would be seen largely as a symbolic win in Brussels, experts said. “The political significance will outweigh the military contribution,” said Kristian Soby Kristensen, a senior researcher at Copenhagen University’s Centre for Military Studies.

Those opposed to abandoning the opt-out argued that the EU’s defence cooperation is hampered by excessive bureaucracy and inefficient decision-making, and that a joint European defence would come at the expense of Nato.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/02 Ukraine SBU hunt Russia supporters
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-security-services-hunt-for-russia-supporters-and-agents-in-their-midst-11654161968?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>KHARKIV, Ukraine—Six officers from Ukraine’s domestic intelligence agency, the SBU, ran up the stairs of a drab apartment block in a residential neighborhood of this city near the Russian border at 6:30 a.m. Hiding behind a shield that flashed disorienting lights, one of them banged on Igor Popov’s door.</p> <p>“Open up, SBU is here!” bellowed the lead officer, clad in body armor with his face covered by a balaclava. “Open up now, SBU is working here,” he said, adding a couple of expletives.</p> <p>As the door lock turned, the squad rushed in. “On the floor, on the floor now!” the commander shouted at Mr. Popov, 59. “All clear,” yelled another after checking for weapons as the men tied the suspect’s hands and moved him to the living room for an interrogation.</p> <p>“You are a Soviet man, right? You must believe the Soviet Union stood for peace, right?” an investigator asked as Mr. Popov lay sprawled on the carpet. “Yes,” he replied quietly. “So why are you supporting those people who are shelling our city?” the investigator asked.</p>

“I haven’t done anything wrong,” Mr. Popov said as agents of the SBU, the Security Service of Ukraine, examined a tablet belonging to Mr. Popov. They flicked through posts on his social-media account that praised Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov and featured the letter Z, a symbol of [Russia’s war on Ukraine](#).

Shelves in the hallways and living room were packed with a collection of Soviet and Russian military-themed fiction. A two-volume biography of Stalin, “Generalissimo” took pride of place. In the kitchen, a magnet on the refrigerator featured an image of Mr. Putin holding a puppy.

In Kharkiv and other predominantly Russian-speaking parts of eastern Ukraine, a sizable share of the population, especially among older generations, long felt more affinity with Moscow than Kyiv. That sentiment has been eroded by Russia’s conduct in the Donbas region, parts of which it has controlled since 2014, and, even more, by the violence unleashed when [Russian forces invaded in February](#).

But some Ukrainians continue to side with Moscow. And in a conflict that Ukraine sees as existential, Ukrainian security services are hunting for citizens that they view as abetting the enemy. That involves active pursuit of collaborators in Russian-held territory, some of whom have been targeted in recent assassination attempts, and detentions of suspected Russian agents.

“We do these raids almost every day,” said one of the SBU officers in Mr. Popov’s apartment, who like most others in the team was seconded to Kharkiv, the largest city in eastern Ukraine, from the capital Kyiv in April.

Many of those arrested are posting pro-Kremlin messages on social media, driven by loyalties to Russia and without any contact by the government in Moscow, the SBU says. Some take money from the Russians to do so. A handful were actively passing military information, such as Ukrainian artillery positions, to the enemy, according to the SBU.

According to the SBU, Mr. Popov was a prodigious poster on social media, praising Russian war efforts and wishing for a speedy victory for Moscow. Mr. Popov was detained on suspicion of violating article 436-2 of Ukraine’s criminal code, which punishes with up to five years in prison the production and distribution of materials that publicly support and glorify the enemy in wartime.

He remains behind bars, awaiting a trial, according to the SBU, and couldn’t be reached for comment.

Such supporters of Moscow are relatively rare in Kyiv and areas of northern Ukraine that Russia attempted to seize before retreating in late March. In Kharkiv, street clashes erupted between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian groups in 2014, when pro-Russian elements briefly occupied the regional administration headquarters.

Russian proxies failed here at the time, but they succeeded with Moscow’s help in capturing the main cities of the Donbas—Donetsk and Luhansk—and establishing Russian-controlled “people’s republics” there.

Since the Feb. 24 invasion, Russian forces have destroyed more than 2,000 high-rises in Kharkiv and months of shelling that have leveled entire residential neighborhoods. In Donbas, several smaller cities, including Mariupol and Severodonetsk, have been reduced to rubble by Russian artillery.

“Kharkiv is a Russian-speaking city and there used to be a very loyal attitude to the Russian Federation here,” said Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov, himself a Russian-speaker. “But now the situation has turned 180 degrees. The east of Ukraine is more radical in its attitude to the Russian Federation than the west, because we see all the horrors that are being perpetrated here. It’s one thing to watch it on TV, and it’s another to actually live through it.”

Unlike the wars in former Yugoslavia or the Caucasus, the conflict in Ukraine isn’t driven by religion, native language or ethnicity, but by a sense of national belonging and, for many Ukrainians, a desire to

live in a democracy. This means that, for many, especially in the east, whether to consider oneself Russian or Ukrainian—and whether to support Moscow or Kyiv in the war—is a matter of choice rather than birth.

The result is that many families, particularly in the Donbas, have been split, with siblings finding themselves on the opposite sides of the front line. Many Ukrainian soldiers come from Russian-occupied Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea and say they are fighting so they can return to their hometowns one day.

Pavlo Kyrylenko, the Ukrainian governor of the Donetsk region, knows it firsthand. His brother has been an intelligence official in the Russian-controlled Donetsk People's Republic since 2014 and has appeared repeatedly on Russian TV. His parents, too, have remained in Russian-held Donetsk, and he says he hasn't spoken to them or his brother in years.

"Family ties cannot be a reason to maintain connections with people who support the other side," Mr. Kyrylenko said. "My convictions, my love for my country, don't allow me morally to even communicate or try to convince someone there."

In recent weeks, Mr. Kyrylenko has tried to persuade civilians in his region to leave. Between 80% and 90% of the residents of Ukrainian-controlled cities on the front lines in Donbas have heeded these appeals and fled to safer parts of Ukraine or abroad, unwilling to face the risk of being stranded under Russian occupation.

Many of those who remain want to live under Moscow's rule once again, Ukrainian officials in Donbas acknowledge. Some older people are counting on receiving higher Russian pensions—which under some circumstances is possible without losing access to existing Ukrainian benefits.

A few remaining residents in Severodonetsk, interviewed last month before Russian forces arrived in the city, declined to provide their full names and were reluctant to talk about their allegiances. "We don't care what flag is flying over the city as long as there is peace," said one young man. "We're not following politics, we're just trying to survive," added a middle-aged woman.

After Russian forces entered parts of the city in recent days, some locals emerged from hide-outs in nearly-empty residential towers, cheering Russian troops and greeting their relatives in Russia as a Russian TV crew passed by.

"We've been waiting for you for so long," said one middle-aged man in a small group singing a Russian patriotic song. "We are so glad that you have come to us," said a woman in the group, according to a recording broadcast on Russian state TV.

Despite these occasional expressions of support, Russian efforts to build a powerful fifth column in Ukraine have largely failed, in part because much of the money that the Kremlin had poured into the effort has been stolen along the way, said Maj. Gen. Kyrylo Budanov, the head of Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency.

"People were paid by Russia, but were their agents really here? Dead souls," said Gen. Budanov. "I don't have any doubts that Russia had and maybe still possesses a wide network of agents, and agents of influence, in Ukraine. But as for their abilities, now we can see the result, and it's not very impressive."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Hundreds of Russian troops broke ranks?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/documents-reveal-hundreds-of-russian-troops-broke-ranks-over-ukraine-orders-11654094212
GIST	Hundreds of Russian soldiers have escaped the fighting in Ukraine or refused to take part during the early stages of the war , according to military decrees viewed by The Wall Street Journal as well as accused soldiers and lawyers defending them.

Military analysts and Ukrainian officials say there have been many more.

Russia's army [stumbled badly](#) early in its invasion of Ukraine and suffered thousands of casualties and the loss of an estimated quarter of its deployed military hardware, a senior Pentagon official said in April. Desertions and insubordination among soldiers, Interior Ministry troops and members of the National Guard are compounding the problem.

The desertions place Russian authorities in a bind over how to punish those who refuse to serve without drawing more attention to the issue, defense experts said. The Russian military is short on manpower and seeking recruits to help turn the tide in Ukraine.

Penalties have so far been largely limited to formal dismissals from service. Because Russia hasn't declared war on Ukraine, there also are few legal grounds for criminal charges against those who refuse to serve abroad, according to a lawyer and former military prosecutor's assistant who is defending soldiers fired for insubordination.

"So many people don't want to fight," said Mikhail Benyash, a Russian lawyer representing a dozen members of the National Guard, a domestic military force that quashes protests in Russia. Mr. Benyash is assisting soldiers appealing their dismissals after they refused orders to enter Ukraine in February, according to National Guard documents. Members of the guard were sent into Ukraine to patrol streets and suppress dissent in occupied areas.

Government officials in Moscow didn't respond to requests for comment.

Russian soldier Albert Sakhibgareev, 24 years old, was ordered to Russia's Belgorod Region on Feb. 8 for military exercises, he said. After President Vladimir Putin gave his Feb. 21 speech dismissing Ukraine's right to statehood, Mr. Sakhibgareev said most of the troops at his base had their phones confiscated and were told to wear bulletproof jackets. They unloaded projectiles and ammunition from Soviet-era trucks but didn't know what was to come.

He was startled awake by close artillery fire around dawn on Feb. 24. Two shells landed a mile and a half from his barracks on Russia's side of the border with Ukraine. Military helicopters and other aircraft flew overhead, appearing to head into battle. Mr. Sakhibgareev said he learned what was happening only after furtively scrolling a news headline on Telegram: "Russia Invades Ukraine." He got scared, fled the army base and went into hiding.

"None of us wanted this war," Mr. Sakhibgareev said. His mother, Galina Sakhibgareeva, said her son enlisted out of patriotism and because there were few other career opportunities in their small town in Russia's Ufa region, located about 700 miles east of Moscow.

A military career was a chance to make a life for himself. "I brought up a tall, athletic son and gave him away for the defense of the country," she said.

By the book

Mr. Benyash, the lawyer, said that within several days of publishing a March 24 post about his National Guard cases, more than 1,000 service members and employees of the Interior Ministry, which oversees policing in Russia, reached out for legal assistance. Many had defied orders to enter Ukraine for combat or to suppress protests in towns occupied by Russian forces, he said.

On March 17, Russian human-rights group [Agora](#) launched a Telegram channel where service members and their relatives could seek legal help for refusing orders. Pavel Chikov, the group's director, said 721 members of the army and security forces responded over the following 10 days.

A March 4 military decree signed by a Russian base commander ordered the dismissals of several hundred army servicemen who refused orders while on duty near the Ukraine border, according to a copy of the document viewed by the Journal. It is unclear if the ex-soldiers faced further penalties.

Another document viewed by the Journal, signed by a judge at a military court in the city of Nalchik and dated May 25, rejected an appeal by 115 members of Russia's National Guard who were dismissed from service for refusing to enter Ukraine in late February and early March.

Russian law calls for penalties of up to 10 years in prison for service members who abandon sworn duties. Deserters can be spared criminal charges if they can prove they acted under immense pressure or had personal issues that prompted them to flee. Service members also have a right to refuse orders they believe are illegal.

Punishment for refusing orders in what Mr. Putin calls a "special military operation" in Ukraine has so far been limited to firing soldiers without paying back wages or by stripping them of special mortgage plans and other service benefits, said Pavel Luzin, a Moscow-based defense expert.

"If it hypes these cases, the government will inadvertently amplify the scale of desertion, which is small in percentage terms but will continue to grow," he said.

A message stamped on one discharged Russian soldier's military identification said: "Prone to treason, deception and dishonesty. Refused to participate in the special military operation," according to a photograph of it published last month by the soldiers' lawyer, Maksim Grebenyuk.

'Bring your lawyers'

Transcripts from two audio files purportedly recorded by soldiers and published April 22 by Russian independent outlet Mediazona documented instances of soldiers who refused orders.

"You can't not go," a base commander said in a recording heard by the Journal. "If you don't go there, you'll spend 15 years stamping across a [prison] courtyard."

The soldier said he had talked to lawyers who said he didn't risk prison for refusing to fight in Ukraine.

"Bring your lawyers here," the commander replied. "We'll have a chat with them."

Western intelligence agencies say there is broad evidence of chaos and disorder among Russian forces in Ukraine.

A senior U.S. defense official told reporters last month that Russian "mid-grade officers at various levels, even up to the battalion level...have either refused to obey orders or [are] not obeying them with the same measure of alacrity that you would expect an officer to obey."

In the First Chechen war, from 1994 to 1996, thousands of Russian soldiers deserted after being sent to fight in the mountains of the Caucasus, often with little more than a month of training, military experts said.

Afterward, Moscow imposed stiffer penalties for desertion, including the maximum 10-year prison sentence. Mr. Putin made revamping the military a priority after the country's invasion of Georgia in 2008 exposed shortcomings in equipment and training.

Low pay, corruption and hazing of new service members continue to undermine morale, according to an April report by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, an international network of investigative journalists.

Lawyers defending Russian deserters, as well as journalists reporting about the cases, are endangered. On April 13, Mr. Benyash was charged with "discrediting Russia's armed forces" for statements he made in a YouTube video published in the first days of the war, according to documents viewed by the Journal. The case has since been dropped.

	<p>On the same day Mr. Benyash was charged, Mikhail Afanasyev, a journalist who had earlier published an article about 11 National Guardsmen in the Khakassia region of Siberia who refused orders to enter Ukraine, was arrested. He was charged with spreading “fake news” about the Russian military.</p> <p>“My whole life I’ve fought for my right to be a journalist and tell the truth,” he said before his arrest. He faces 10 years in prison.</p> <p>Military prosecutors eventually reached Mr. Sakhibgareev and his mother by phone and persuaded him to return to service. They allowed him a transfer to another base, one far from the front lines.</p> <p>Mr. Sakhibgareev faced more serious criminal charges the longer he stayed away, his lawyer Almaz Nabiev said. Authorities are awaiting the results of Mr. Sakhibgareev’s medical examination. They could pronounce him unfit for service or decide to press charges for desertion.</p> <p>Mr. Benyash said many soldiers who refuse orders to go to Ukraine figure it is easier to risk a criminal case than risk their lives to fight.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/02 China warns New Zealand on trade ties
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-warns-new-zealand-against-squandering-trade-relationship-11654147681?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>WELLINGTON, New Zealand—China’s top diplomat in New Zealand warned that the South Pacific country risked squandering close trade ties as Wellington increasingly sides with the U.S. and Australia in trying to limit Beijing’s influence in the region.</p> <p>Wang Xialong, China’s ambassador to New Zealand, told the New Zealand China Council that an economic relationship in which China buys nearly a third of the country’s exports shouldn’t be taken for granted. His speech came a day after a joint statement by New Zealand and the U.S. following a meeting between Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and President Biden drew a rebuke from Beijing.</p> <p>New Zealand has sought to portray its foreign policy as independent as it attempts to balance economic reliance on China with its security ties with the U.S. and Australia. However, the government’s sanctions against Russia following its invasion of Ukraine, and criticism of China’s recently signed security pact with the Solomon Islands, have aligned it with Western positions on those issues. It also has expressed concern about China’s so-far unsuccessful push for a regional deal with Pacific island nations.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Ms. Ardern met President Biden at the White House to discuss the Pacific and other issues. That meeting came around a week after New Zealand became a founding member of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, a new U.S.-led economic platform meant to counter China’s influence through cooperation on global issues such as supply chains, clean energy and digital rules.</p> <p>“We are concerned with growing strategic competition in the Pacific region, which threatens to undermine existing institutions and arrangements that underpin the region’s security,” the U.S. and New Zealand said in a joint statement at the time of this week’s meeting. They also said any push by a country that didn’t share their security interests to establish a military presence in the Pacific would alter the region’s strategic balance.</p> <p>In response, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Wednesday that the U.S.-New Zealand statement distorted and smeared China’s cooperation with Pacific island nations. He added that Beijing didn’t intend to set up a military base in the region.</p> <p>In his speech to the New Zealand China Council, Mr. Wang said the perception in China of New Zealand as a “green, clean, open and friendly country” is a potent marketing tool for the country’s exports and a pillar of the China-New Zealand relationship that shouldn’t be taken for granted.</p>

“This asset of ours did not come out of nowhere or as a matter of course, but has been slowly built up with hard work over the years from both sides,” he said. “Nor can it be taken for granted. It is thus incumbent upon us, as stakeholders in, and custodians of, the relationship, to protect it carefully, use it wisely, and make sure it will not be squandered.”

Jason Young, director of the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre, said Mr. Wang’s remarks indicate concern that shifting public opinion in New Zealand and China could undermine relations. “I didn’t read it as a threat,” he said. “More a reality of the situation that this is becoming a challenge.”

China is New Zealand’s largest export market, taking more than 30% of all shipments in the past year, and exceeding combined exports to the U.S. and Australia. In 2008, New Zealand became the first developed nation to sign a free-trade agreement with Beijing.

“It comes across as a pointed reminder to Wellington. Essentially it seems to be saying to tread very carefully,” Geoffrey Miller, international analyst at Victoria University’s Democracy Project, said of the ambassador’s speech. “Australia’s experience shows how things can change very quickly.”

China imposed tariffs on Australian wine and barley in 2020, and introduced other restrictions on imports such as coal, after Australia’s government called for an international investigation into Beijing’s early response to the Covid-19 pandemic. After an initial slump, Australian exporters were able to send more wine and barley to other markets.

Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said New Zealand’s government has signaled to exporters that they should be actively trying to cultivate other overseas markets. “This is a ‘China and’ strategy, she said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Baby formula shortage worsens
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/baby-formula-shortage-worsens-hitting-low-income-families-hardest-11654088402?mod=hp_listb_pos4
GIST	<p>New data suggest that the U.S. baby-formula shortage is deepening, particularly hitting states in the South and the Southwest.</p> <p>Nationally, 23% of powdered baby formula was out of stock in the week ended May 22, compared with 21% during the previous week, according to the latest figures from market-research firm IRI. In the first week of January and before the recall of formula produced by Abbott Laboratories, 11% of powdered baby formula was out of stock because of pandemic-related supply-chain shortages and inflation. Before the pandemic, the normal out-of-stock range for powdered formula was 5% to 7%, according to IRI.</p> <p>President Biden met virtually with baby formula manufacturers Wednesday, pledging to continue efforts to speed domestic production, as well as import formula from other countries.</p> <p>“We will continue to work around the clock with manufacturers, states, doctors and families,” Mr. Biden said.</p> <p>The CEOs of companies that produce formula said they had increased production to meet demand. Several used the word “crisis” to describe the situation. Attendees included representatives from Gerber, Reckitt Benckiser Group and Perrigo Co., which manufactures formula for private label brands.</p> <p>Abbott wasn’t in attendance.</p> <p>Mr. Biden told reporters it would take “a couple more months” before things were back to normal.</p>

The Biden administration last month announced a program to increase imports of formula until U.S. production returns to normal. On Wednesday, Mr. Biden announced more Operation Fly Formula flights, which will include Kendamil infant formula made by U.K.-based Kendal Nutricare and Australia-based [Bubs Australia](#).

Government officials have said the shortage is especially acute for families that rely on subsidies from the federally funded Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, or WIC, as well as for infants with special dietary needs. The Access to Baby Formula Act of 2022 signed by Mr. Biden last month allows families to buy formula products beyond what the WIC program rules allow.

States including Kansas, Georgia, Texas, Montana and Tennessee have continued to experience the worst of the shortage.

Some 1.6 million infants were eligible for WIC assistance as of 2019, the most recent year for which data were available. The program is designed to provide formula at no cost to families and positions the federal government as the [largest purchaser of infant formula](#).

About half of infant formula nationwide is purchased by participants using WIC benefits, according to the White House. More than 50% of infants born in Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama and Louisiana received WIC benefits in 2019, according to a WSJ analysis of census and U.S. Agriculture Department data.

The program's exclusive sales contract system ensures that in each state, one of the major formula brands has the majority of market share.

The result is a marketplace with little competition and little flexibility, making it vulnerable if something goes wrong.

WIC state agencies reimburse retailers the full retail price of the formula purchased with WIC vouchers. The agencies then request rebate reimbursements from manufacturers. Program participants are required to use their vouchers for formula made by the state's designated manufacturer, dramatically increasing that company's market share in a given state.

The program's exclusive sales contract system with major formula brands makes it difficult for smaller makers to gain market share. Abbott's Similac brand is the most widely used in WIC, covering 34 states and the District of Columbia.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 SEA rise in lost items over holiday weekend
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3500903/seatac-airport-sees-a-rise-in-lost-items-over-the-holiday-weekend/
GIST	<p>More than 500 items were lost at Sea-Tac Airport over Memorial Day weekend, according to Hallmark Aviation's manager, Tele Paogofie. The Lost and Found office, located in baggage claim across from carousel 13, is filled with well-organized bins and shelves filled with what looked like over 100 cell phones, earbuds, laptops, strollers, diaper bags, keys, driver licenses, and anything else you can imagine losing at the airport.</p> <p>"We have an organized, cataloged system with a storage life of thirty days," Paogofie said.</p> <p>After that, the items are transferred to the Port of Seattle and are designated to an organization of their choice, according to Paogofie.</p> <p>When asked what's the strangest item lost, she said "I think it would be human ashes. It was a wife who lost her husband. It was stored in a lunch Tupperware with the death certificate on it and it had her number. So, we were able to call her, and she came back and picked it up."</p>

	<p>70 to 90 items are deposited in the lost and found on a typical day, 70% coming from TSA. When the item is turned in, it's immediately documented. Hallmark Aviation uses a system software from Germany that requires every item to be cataloged with explicit detail. This detailed system helps clients reunite with their lost items.</p> <p>Once you have realized that you have lost something, you can log onto their website and file a quick claim online, or if you have time, you can file a claim in person at their window or call (206) 787-5312.</p> <p>"It's typical for someone with a lost cell phone to call their phone and we answer and tell them that we have it. They usually run from the gate down to our office and we reunite them," said Paogofie. "If you reach your destination, you can call us or file a report online. Once you file a report and we place the item in the system, it can take up to twenty hours for us to respond."</p> <p>Once an item has been cataloged and a person makes an inquiry, the system will notify Hallmark that there is a match, which is how items are generally returned.</p> <p>"We do offer FedEx options at the owner's expense," said Paogofie. "So we have three return methods, you can pick it up in person with a storage life of 30 days. You can assign or delegate someone like a family member to pick it up for you, or we offer FedEx options." The storage life of the item is free.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 Texas border gaps: razor wire, prosecutions
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/1/texas-plugs-bidens-border-gaps-razor-wire-and-pros/
GIST	<p>Texas has deployed more than 40 miles of razor wire and other border barriers along its boundary with Mexico, building a makeshift fence to plug gaps that the governor says the Biden administration left undefended from the migrant surge.</p> <p>State prosecutors won their first conviction against an illegal immigrant for trespassing, as Texas moves to mete out criminal justice consequences that used to be the sole purview of the federal government.</p> <p>Texas has been busing illegal immigrants straight to Washington and dropping them off near the U.S. Capitol. Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, has committed the state to build its own border wall, and he deployed the National Guard and state police at the border to help the feds and the locals.</p> <p>The governor has emerged as the chief immigration foil for President Biden in the same way that blue-state governors led the charge against President Trump. But where Democrats pursued lenient policies by enacting sanctuary laws and extending benefits to illegal immigrants, Mr. Abbott is moving to station Texas as its own power in immigration enforcement with what he has dubbed Operation Lone Star.</p> <p>"We are doing everything we possibly can to prevent people coming across the border and into the state of Texas," the governor told reporters last week at a press conference held before the horrific school shooting in Uvalde.</p> <p>The razor wire is the most visible move, and perhaps the most effective.</p> <p>The Texas National Guard last week told The Washington Times that it had put up 42 miles of fencing and concertina wire — the official name for the looped strands of razor wire — since the start of Operation Lone Star.</p> <p>The Trump administration deployed miles of wire when it faced migrant surges in 2018 and 2019. Mr. Trump called it "a beautiful sight," though some of the communities where the wire went up said it looked threatening and endangered locals who might stumble into it.</p> <p>Texas declined to talk about locations where the barriers have been placed, citing "operational security," but the governor celebrated the extent of deployments.</p>

“Our goal is to make sure we have that concertina wire in every inch of the border,” he said. “The only place we would be prohibited from putting it would be where federal land may be located, or if there’s private property where a private property owner does not want it.”

Razor wire serves as a sort of poor man’s border wall. It’s relatively easy to deploy and can often achieve the same thing as a larger and more permanent barrier: funneling illegal immigrants away from some locations and toward points where law enforcement can be waiting.

Increasingly, that means a state or local officer rather than a federal agent.

That was what led to the first trespassing jury trial last month in Kinney County, which has a sliver of the border near Del Rio and has become a major funnel point for illegal immigrants.

Lester Hidalgo Aguilar, a 39-year-old Honduran man, was convicted by a jury.

Tony Hackebeit, who led the prosecution, told jurors they had a chance to make a statement about the border, according to The Texas Tribune, which covered the trial.

“Send that message,” Mr. Hackebeit said. “Send the message to not just your community that you agree this should not be allowed to happen. But send a message as loud as you can to all of those people who are continually doing this.”

The jury deliberated for 20 minutes and found Aguilar guilty of trespassing on private ranchland, The Tribune reported. The judge slapped him with the maximum punishment of a year in jail.

Aguilar is one of more than 3,000 trespassing cases brought in Kinney County against migrant men.

Laura Pena, director of the Texas Civil Rights Project’s beyond borders program, said Texas has created “an illegal, separate state immigration enforcement agency.”

“The system is rife with due process and civil rights violations for U.S. citizens and non-U.S. citizens put through Operation Lone Star,” she said.

She said the cost so far runs to \$4 billion.

“Border communities don’t want billions of dollars rerouted to razor wire, walls and more jails. Border communities want that money spent on what it was intended for — better access to health care, an education system that is safe and exciting for our children, and COVID relief funds to continue battling the pandemic,” Ms. Pena said.

Texas accounts for roughly half of illegal border crossers nabbed so far this year by federal agents and officers at Customs and Border Protection, and local officials say the surge has taken a toll on communities.

Filings in federal court cases detail the financial struggles that the state and counties face from handling the onslaught of migrants, with criminal justice, education and medical budgets all being tapped.

And there are more stark measures.

Zavala County, whose boundaries start a dozen or so miles off the border, brought in a temporary morgue to hold extra bodies of migrants who died trying to sneak through remote ranchlands, the governor said.

Some of Mr. Abbott’s supporters say there are steps he hasn’t taken but should.

	<p>One idea gaining steam in some border conversations is to have governors declare the surge of people an “invasion” under the U.S. Constitution. That would trigger another section of the Constitution that suggests states can raise their own armies if they are “actually invaded.”</p> <p>The idea has been developed by some high-profile figures from the Trump administration, and Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich has issued a legal opinion saying his state’s governor could legally do it.</p> <p>In Texas, a state legislator has asked Attorney General Ken Paxton for a similar ruling. George P. Bush, who had been challenging Mr. Paxton in a Republican primary but lost in a runoff election last week, said he backed the idea of an invasion declaration.</p> <p>Texas and Arizona have deployed National Guard troops, but those who back the invasion strategy say there are too many limits on what the soldiers can do right now.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Russia slow, bloody slog eastern Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/1/frozen-war-russias-slow-bloody-slog-eastern-ukrain/
GIST	<p>Russia’s hot war in Ukraine could be about to turn cold.</p> <p>With Friday marking the 100th day of the invasion, it has become clear that Russian President Vladimir Putin has scaled back his once-lofty ambitions of immediately decapitating the Ukrainian government and bringing most, if not all, of the country under Moscow’s thumb.</p> <p>Instead, Mr. Putin and his military leaders have revamped their mission. They mounted a fierce offensive on eastern Ukraine’s disputed Donbas region and sought to drive enemy forces out of the Luhansk and Donetsk provinces.</p> <p>In the process, the Kremlin has redefined victory and all but assured a long, drawn-out slog that will likely kill thousands more and exacerbate growing food and refugee crises in Europe.</p> <p>NATO, which Mr. Putin hoped to intimidate with his military campaign, shows a newfound sense of purpose. The alliance is poised to boost defense spending and expand its membership as a direct result of the Russian offensive.</p> <p>Russia, at least in the short term, might be content to chip away at Ukrainian defenses and bring more of the country’s eastern flank into its orbit. Such a strategy is on clear display this week as Russian troops mercilessly pound the city of Sievierodonetsk, which is now largely under Russian occupation, much like the strategically vital port city of Mariupol.</p> <p>Now that the war is confined to a much smaller theater in eastern and southern Ukraine, foreign policy specialists say Moscow and Kyiv are engaged not in a continent-altering clash but in an era of “frozen,” highly localized conflict. That reality could result in few notable gains on the battlefield even as the fighting fuels more death and destruction across Ukraine and economic turmoil worldwide.</p> <p>Some analysts say Mr. Putin’s overall long-term goal — driving Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy from power and installing a compliant regime in his place — hasn’t changed. But he now appears forced to pursue that strategy in a much more measured, gradual way: by draining Ukrainians’ will to fight and eroding the West’s tolerance for economic pain with slow, bloody, prolonged ground attacks and continuous shellings of cities.</p> <p>“I do believe Mr. Putin and his military have seen they now have to change their overall expectations,” said retired Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, former NATO allied supreme commander in Europe.</p> <p>Just months ago, Russian forces were on the outskirts of Kyiv, Kharkiv and other major Ukrainian cities. Now they are struggling to make marginal gains along Ukraine’s far eastern and southern regions.</p>

“I don’t see them proceeding further southwest along the coast toward Odesa,” Gen. Breedlove said Wednesday at a virtual event hosted by the American Security Project. “They’re already starting to fortify some positions, meaning they don’t intend to move forward.

“I think what we see on the battlefield is a Russia that is trying to solidify the few gains that it’s made — few but important gains it’s made in the Donbas so that Mr. Putin can declare a victory and try to freeze the conflict now with more Ukrainian land in his possession,” he said.

For Ukraine, a frozen conflict likely means more instability and limited chances for a clear victory, absent a significant Western military intervention. Before the full-scale war began on Feb. 24, pro-Russian separatist forces backed by Mr. Putin’s armies were battling Ukrainian troops in the Donbas. Kyiv was unable to liberate that territory, nor was it able to prevent Moscow from seizing the Crimean Peninsula in a largely bloodless annexation in 2014.

It’s far too early to draw conclusions about how or when the war may end. Pentagon officials say the brutal, close-quarters fighting in the Donbas means momentum could swing wildly over the coming weeks and months.

“It is, in many ways, a very close and intimate fight. I think I’ve described it as a knife fight, and that’s not an inaccurate way of putting it,” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said last week. “There are places, towns, villages, hamlets that the Russians and Ukrainians are in very close contact. And it’s very dynamic. ... There are towns and villages which fall to the Russians on a given day, and then the Ukrainians will recover [them] days later. There’s still a lot of back-and-forth.

“And I don’t think being predictive about how long it’s going to take or who’s going to win is a useful exercise right now,” he said. “What we are focused on is making sure that the Ukrainians can succeed on the battlefield. And again, that’s the nature of the conversations that we’re having.”

Alternate realities

After defying the expectations of U.S. government and private analysts, observers say, the conflict could take several paths. Russia could continue making slow, incremental gains in the Donbas, breathing new life into the Russian war machine, boosting morale among its troops, and giving Mr. Putin newfound leverage to push for a cease-fire on his terms.

If the West continues direct support for Ukraine, such a scenario could quickly spiral out of control, researchers with the Atlantic Council think tank wrote recently in a detailed analysis that explored several possibilities.

“Further into 2023, NATO allies continue to send more lethal military aid as Ukraine — which refused Putin’s proposed cease-fire — tries to retake occupied territory. The quality and quantity of this aid tempts Moscow to continue disrupting supply flows into Ukraine, increasing the risk of attacks close to (or even on) NATO territory while widening the conflict between the alliance and Russia,” Atlantic Council scholars Mathew Burrows and Robert A. Manning wrote. They mapped out a scenario in which Russia captures more territory in the Donbas and slowly strangles the Ukrainian resistance.

“By late 2023, Western consensus is fraying,” they wrote of that theoretical future. “Concerned by economic costs, Ukrainian suffering, refugee burdens, and fears of escalation (including the risk of a nuclear attack by Russia), Germany and France lead a multinational effort to press Kyiv to [explore] a peace arrangement with Moscow.”

Other possible outcomes include energized and better-armed Ukrainian forces driving back Russian invaders, as they did in late February and early March during the battle for Kyiv.

Ukrainian troops also pushed Russian forces away from Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, effectively ending Russia's military push north of the Donbas.

If the conflict remains truly frozen, with neither side making any significant gains over a period of months or even years, Mr. Putin could face growing pressure at home to abandon the war and strike a deal with Mr. Zelenskyy, Mr. Burrows and Mr. Manning wrote.

How the U.S. and its European allies might handle a lengthy, frozen conflict is a key question. For now, NATO remains mostly aligned in its commitment to massive economic sanctions on Moscow. Europe also is seeking to move away rapidly from its dependence on Russian oil and gas.

The White House on Wednesday announced a \$700 million military assistance package to Ukraine, underscoring President Biden's commitment, at least for now, to providing direct aid to Ukrainian fighters over the loud objections of the Kremlin.

Months or years of conflict could make such an approach more difficult as Washington and other Western capitals face pressures of their own.

Soaring gas prices have complicated the equation, and a war between two of the world's great grain producers has sent food prices soaring and unnerved governments across the Middle East and Asia. Mr. Biden and his European counterparts could face pressure to push harder for a cease-fire agreement if fuel and food costs keep rising.

Mr. Zelenskyy, who has shot to global stardom as the face of his country's surprisingly effective resistance, also faces hard questions about terms for a cease-fire. Ukrainian officials insist they will never relinquish sovereignty claims, including to Crimea, but a return to the status quo before Feb. 24 would leave significant swaths of the Donbas effectively in Russia's control.

Although Russian losses in troops and materiel have been massive, Mr. Zelenskyy revealed in an interview this week with the U.S. network Newsmax that his country is averaging 100 deaths and some 500 more wounded every day in the fighting. "The situation is very difficult," he acknowledged.

U.S. and NATO officials have said they would accept any agreement to end the fighting that is acceptable to the government in Kyiv.

Some observers say it's vital that the West remain firm, no matter how long the fighting lasts.

"Now we have to determine how we resolve this conflict," Gen. Breedlove said. "Will we once again reward bad behavior by giving Mr. Putin the land he has grabbed in this war?"

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Northcom: threats to homeland surging
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/1/inside-ring-northcom-threats-us-homeland-surfing/
GIST	<p>The commander of the Pentagon's Northern Command recently told Congress that the United States faces growing threats of attack from China, Russia and North Korea.</p> <p>Air Force Gen. Glen D. VanHerck said the combination of missile threats, cyberattacks and information warfare indicates Northcom "is facing the most dynamic and strategically complex set of challenges in the history of the command."</p> <p>"Quite bluntly, my ability to conduct the missions assigned to U.S. Northcom and NORAD has eroded and continues to erode," he told the Senate Armed Services Committee May 18. The four-star general is also head of the U.S.-Canada North American Aerospace Defense command.</p> <p>"Our country is under attack every day in the information space and cyber domain," he noted.</p> <p>"Competitors are spreading disinformation, actively sowing division and fanning the flames of internal</p>

discord with the intent to undermine the foundation of our nation, our democracy, and democracies around the world.”

China, Russia, North Korea and other adversaries are aggressively working to exploit security vulnerabilities and policy gaps, especially in the cyber domain.

“They are preparing for potential crisis or conflict with the intent to limit decision space for our senior leaders by holding national critical infrastructure at risk, disrupting and delaying our ability to project power from the homeland, and undermining our will to intervene in a regional crisis,” Gen. VanHerck said.

Adversaries in the past year accelerated deploying weapons “specifically designed to threaten our homeland,” he said, adding that of equal concern are what the general said were “relentless, coordinated” efforts by adversaries to weaken institutions and alliances at the core of U.S. strength.

According to Gen. VanHerck, China and Russia are aggressively deploying advanced offensive cyber and space warfare weapons, cruise missiles, hypersonic weapons and strike weapons capable of evading detection that can “strike targets in our homeland from multiple vectors of attack and in all domains.”

To counter the threats, Northcom, whose areas of responsibility include the continental U.S., Puerto Rico, Canada and Mexico, needs better sensors and updated weapons along with policies better suited to the dangers.

Gen. VanHerck described Russia as the “primary military threat” to the U.S. homeland and said Moscow’s targeting methods are being copied by others. Moscow deployed a hypersonic missile in December 2019 that glides at extremely high speeds and then maneuvers at low altitude in a bid to frustrate the adversary’s ability to detect and track them.

Moscow’s next major advances will be new long-range missiles deployed in the next few years that Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed can attack the United States with nuclear warheads from both northern and southern trajectories. Those trajectories mean U.S. leaders will not have the ability to respond by protecting government functions and ordering retaliatory strikes, he said.

Russian cyberattacks and direct ascent anti-satellite missiles also are major worries and are backed by new long-range cruise missiles, including the air-launched AS-23 missile, that can attack the United States from Russian airspace.

“This capability challenges my ability to detect an attack and mount an effective defense,” he said.

Submarine threats include the deployment of the first two Severodvinsk-class guided missile submarines, which can attack “within cruise missile range of our coastlines to threaten critical infrastructure during an escalating crisis,” Gen. VanHerck said, adding that the new subs will be equipped with hypersonic missiles in the next few years.

China’s attack threats to the U.S. mainland include new weapons that “hold our homeland at risk in multiple domains in an attempt to complicate our decision making and to disrupt, delay and degrade force flow in crisis and destroy our will in conflict,” he said.

“China has maintained the ability to strike our homeland with strategic nuclear weapons since the early 1980s, but today its nuclear capabilities are growing rapidly in quantity and sophistication,” Gen. VanHerck said.

Of special concerns is China’s space-based fractional orbital bombardment system tested in July 2021. The weapon delivered a hypersonic glide vehicle that demonstrated the ability to survive reentry and perform high-speed and maneuvering glide operations after orbiting around the globe.

The successful test was “a feat Russia never attempted before fielding their own HGV-equipped ICBMs two years ago,” he said.

“When fielded, China’s ICBM-class HGV will be able to evade current ground- and space-based early warning capabilities due to its low-altitude approach and ability to maneuver midcourse, which compounds the detection and warning challenges I already face from Russia’s Avangard HGV and advanced cruise missiles,” Gen. VanHerck said.

New evidence suggests Chinese kill prisoners by organ transplant

Researchers have uncovered new evidence linking Chinese medical doctors to the killing of prisoners by removing their organs for transplant.

Matthew P. Robertson and Jacob Lavee, writing in the American Journal of Transplantation, stated that Chinese doctors appear to be violating a core value of medical ethics — executing prisoners by removing organs while they are still alive. Taking organs from live patients violates what the authors call the “dead donor rule,” which requires patients to be declared dead prior to harvesting their organs for transplant.

The two researchers conducted a forensic analysis of 2,838 medical papers drawn from 124,770 Chinese-language transplant publications.

“We find evidence in 71 of these reports, spread nationwide, that brain death could not have properly been declared,” Mr. Robertson and Dr. Lavee stated.

Dr. Lavee is director of the Heart Transplantation Unit at Tel Aviv’s Sheba Medical Center and a professor of surgery at Tel Aviv University. Mr. Robertson is a research fellow with the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation and a doctoral candidate in political science at the Australian National University.

“In these cases, the removal of the heart during organ procurement must have been the proximate cause of the donor’s death,” they stated. “Because these organ donors could only have been prisoners, our findings strongly suggest that physicians in the People’s Republic of China have participated in executions by organ removal.”

Other international investigations have found that China has harvested organs from prisoners as part of a large-scale, lucrative trade.

An international tribunal of medical experts found in 2020 that religious minorities including the Buddhist Falun Gong group and Uyghur Muslims were targeted in live-prisoner organ harvesting. The tribunal called the practice a crime against humanity and, potentially, genocide.

The transplant surgeries were conducted from 1980 to 2015, a period in China when there was no voluntary organ donor system and very few voluntary donors.

“The leader of China’s transplant sector wrote in 2007 that effectively 95% of all organ transplants were from prisoners,” they said. “According to official statements, it was only in 2014 that a national organ allocation system could be used by citizens.”

Based on official Chinese government statements, almost all the organ transplants in the medical papers were from Chinese prisoners, either death-row inmates or political prisoners, the authors said.

“The question remains as to how they were executed, and the role of transplant surgeons and other medical workers in that process,” Mr. Robertson and Dr. Lavee wrote in an article titled, “Execution by organ procurement: Breaching the dead donor rule in China.”

	<p>The researchers analyzed reports of heart and lung transplants.</p> <p>“Procuring vital organs from prisoners demands close cooperation between the executioner and the transplant team,” they stated. “The state’s role is to administer death, while the physician’s role is to procure a viable organ. If the execution is carried out without heed to the clinical demands of the transplant, the organs may be spoiled. Yet if the transplant team becomes too involved, they risk becoming the executioners.”</p> <p>The researchers state that Chinese transplant surgeons failed to establish that prisoners were dead before removing their heart and lungs.</p> <p>The findings were based on medical reports showing organ donors had breathing tubes inserted before they were pronounced dead.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 RIMPAC: world largest int’l maritime drill
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/1/navy-ready-rim-pacific-exercises-worlds-largest-ma/
GIST	<p>More than 40 warships and submarines, along with 25,000 personnel and more than 170 combat aircraft from 26 nations are heading to Hawaii to take part in the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises, the world’s largest international maritime drill.</p> <p>RIMPAC 2022, scheduled for June 29-Aug. 4, will be the 28th exercise in a series that began in 1971. The naval maneuvers will take place in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California, Navy officials said Wednesday.</p> <p>The participating nations will take part in a variety of drills to “exercise a wide range of capabilities and demonstrate the inherent flexibility of maritime forces,” according to officials in the Navy’s 3rd Fleet, which is in command of RIMPAC 2022.</p> <p>They will conduct disaster relief and maritime security missions, including amphibious operations, gunnery drills, anti-submarine and air-defense exercises, counter-piracy missions and mine-clearing, among other drills, officials said.</p> <p>Pacific nations including Australia, Japan, India, South Korea and European countries such as the United Kingdom, France and Germany are sending forces to take part in RIMPAC 2022. They will train and operate together “in order to strengthen their collective forces and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific,” Navy officials said.</p> <p>RIMPAC 2020 had to be scaled back due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The head of the 3rd Fleet will serve as the combined task force commander with a Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force admiral serving as vice commander. An Australian admiral will be the maritime force commander and a Canadian Air Force general will serve as commander of air operations for RIMPAC 2022, officials said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 WHO: Covid ‘getting worse’ in NKorea
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/1/who-covid-getting-worse-not-better-in-north-korea/
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — A top official at the World Health Organization said the U.N. health agency assumes the coronavirus outbreak in North Korea is “getting worse, not better,” despite the secretive country’s recent claims that COVID-19 is slowing there.</p> <p>At a press briefing on Wednesday, WHO’s emergency chief Dr. Mike Ryan appealed to North Korean authorities for more information about the COVID-19 outbreak there, saying “we have real issues in getting access to the raw data and to the actual situation on the ground.” He said WHO has not received</p>

any privileged information about the epidemic - unlike in typical outbreaks when countries may share more sensitive data with the organization so it can evaluate the public health risks for the global community.

“It is very, very difficult to provide a proper analysis to the world when we don’t have access to the necessary data,” he said. WHO has previously voiced concerns about the impact of COVID-19 in North Korea’s population, which is believed to be largely unvaccinated and whose fragile health systems could struggle to deal with a surge of cases prompted by the super-infectious omicron and its subvariants.

Ryan said WHO had offered technical assistance and supplies to North Korean officials multiple times, including offering COVID-19 vaccines on at least three separate occasions.

Last week, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and other top officials discussed revising stringent anti-epidemic restrictions, state media reported, as they maintained a widely disputed claim that the country’s first COVID-19 outbreak is slowing.

The discussion at the North’s Politburo meeting on Sunday suggested it would soon relax a set of draconian curbs imposed after its admission of the omicron outbreak this month out of concern about its food and economic situations.

North Korea’s claims to have controlled COVID-19 without widespread vaccination, lockdowns or drugs have been met with widespread disbelief, particularly its insistence that only dozens have died among many millions infected - a far lower death rate than seen anywhere else in the world.

The North Korean government has said there are about 3.7 million people with fever or suspected COVID-19. But it disclosed few details about the severity of illness or how many people have recovered, frustrating public health experts’ attempt to understand the extent of the outbreak.

“We really would appeal for for a more open approach so we can come to the assistance of the people of (North Korea), because right now we are not in a position to make an adequate risk assessment of the situation on the ground,” Ryan said. He said WHO was working with neighboring countries like China and South Korea to ascertain more about what might be happening in North Korea, saying that the epidemic there could potentially have global implications.

WHO’s criticism of North Korea’s failure to provide more information about its COVID-19 outbreak stands in contrast to the U.N. health agency’s failure to publicly fault China in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic.

In early 2020, WHO’s chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus repeatedly praised China publicly for its speedy response to the emergence of the coronavirus, even as WHO scientists privately grumbled about China’s delayed information-sharing and stalled sharing the genetic sequence of COVID-19.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/02 Day 99 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/02/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-99-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The US will send Ukraine four sophisticated, medium-range rocket systems and ammunition to help try to stall Russian progress in the Donbas region. The rocket systems are part of a new \$700m tranche of security assistance that also includes helicopters, Javelin anti-tank weapon systems, radars, tactical vehicles, spare parts and more. It will take at least three weeks to get the precision weapons and trained troops on to the battlefield, the Pentagon said.• Russia’s foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, said the supply of US advanced rocket systems to Ukraine increases the risk of a “third country” being dragged into the conflict. Lavrov’s deputy, Sergei Ryabkov, said that Moscow viewed US military aid to Ukraine “extremely negatively” and that it would increase the risk of a direct confrontation. The Kremlin spokesperson

Dmitry Peskov added: “We believe that the United States is purposefully and diligently adding fuel to the fire.”

- **The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said Ukraine has given “assurances” that it will not use long-range weapons systems provided by Washington against targets on Russian territory.**
- **Following Joe Biden’s announcement, the UK has reportedly asked the US to sign off on a plan to send advanced, medium-range rocket systems to Ukraine within a few weeks.** Britain’s prime minister, Boris Johnson, spoke with Biden about the transfer of US-made M270 multiple launch rocket systems, which will be followed by a discussion between his foreign secretary, Liz Truss, and Blinken on Thursday, [Politico cited a source as saying](#).
- **Russian forces now control more than two-thirds of the key eastern Ukrainian city of Sievierodonetsk**, according to the regional governor of Luhansk. “Unfortunately, today, Russian troops control most of the city,” Serhiy Gaidai said, adding that [a number of civilians are sheltering from Russian shelling](#) under a chemical plant. The expected loss of Sievierodonetsk, the largest city still held by Kyiv in the Luhansk region, [“is unlikely to be the crux”](#) of Russia’s Donbas campaign, a western official said.
- **Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, conceded that Kyiv’s forces are currently suffering up to 100 fatalities and 500 wounded every day.** The most difficult situation is in the east of Ukraine and southern Donetsk and Luhansk, [Zelenskiy said](#) in an interview with the US Newsmax television channel. Western officials said Ukraine’s estimate that it is losing 60 to 100 troops a day killed [is “pretty credible”](#).
- **A Russian missile hit rail lines in the western Lviv region, a key conduit for supplies of western weapons and other supplies, officials said.** Lviv regional governor Maksym Kozytskiy said five people were wounded in the strike. Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to the country’s interior minister, said the Russians hit the Beskid railway tunnel in the Carpathian Mountains in an apparent effort to cut a key railway link and disrupt shipments of weapons and fuel.
- **Russia said it has completed testing of its hypersonic Zircon cruise missile and will deploy it before the end of the year on a new frigate of its Northern Fleet.** President Vladimir Putin has described the Zircon as part of a [new generation of unrivalled arms systems](#), travelling at nine times the speed of sound.
- **Russian troops have been accused of committing acts of torture against residents in the Russian-controlled Kherson region in southern Ukraine.** The BBC has gathered [multiple first-hand testimonies](#) from Kherson residents who say they were tortured while in the hands of Russian forces.
- **Denmark has voted overwhelmingly to join the EU’s common defence policy**, becoming the last of the bloc’s members to sign up. The referendum on Wednesday, in which voters backed the government’s proposal by 66.9% to 33.1%, followed [historic applications](#) by Denmark’s previously non-aligned Nordic neighbours, Finland and Sweden, to join Nato last month.
- **Nato’s secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said he will convene a meeting in Brussels in the coming days with senior officials from Sweden, Finland and Turkey to discuss Turkey’s opposition to Sweden and Finland joining the alliance.** Blinken said [there was a “strong consensus within Nato, broadly](#), to support the rapid accession of Sweden and Finland” to Nato and he was confident it would happen.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Covid cases 30-times higher than reported?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/01/us-covid-surge-cases-rate
GIST	<p>The United States is now in its fourth-biggest Covid surge, according to official case counts – but experts believe the actual current rate is much higher.</p> <p>America is averaging about 94,000 new cases every day, and hospitalizations have been ticking upward since April, though they remain much lower than previous peaks.</p> <p>But Covid cases could be undercounted by a factor of 30, an early survey of the surge in New York City indicates. “It would appear official case counts are under-estimating the true burden of infection by</p>

about 30-fold, which is a huge surprise,” said Denis Nash, an author of the study and a distinguished professor of epidemiology at the City University of New York School of Public Health.

About one in five – 22% – of adult New Yorkers likely had Covid between 23 April and 8 May, according to the preprint study, which has not been peer-reviewed or published. That would mean 1.5 million adults in the city had Covid in a single two-week period – far higher than official counts during that time.

While the study focused on New York, these findings may be true throughout the rest of the country, Nash said. In fact, New Yorkers likely have better access to testing than most of the country, which means undercounting could be even worse elsewhere.

“It’s very worrisome. To me, it means that our ability to really understand and get ahead of the virus is undermined,” Nash said.

More than half of the Covid patients surveyed also said they didn’t know about Paxlovid, an antiviral that can be highly effective at preventing hospitalization and death among high-risk people. And those who were able to access Paxlovid tended to be younger, with better access to resources, signaling that Paxlovid may still not be reaching those who need it the most.

“We need to be able to know who among the most vulnerable is not getting access to Paxlovid after they have a Covid infection, and make sure that they’re being reached and targeted quickly,” Nash said.

Gaps in case counts may also explain why many people don’t realize the US is in the midst of a serious surge now, experts said. Even those paying attention to cases likely don’t realize how widespread Covid is right now.

“We’ve always known there were undercounts. We didn’t always know by how much they were undercounted,” he said. But in recent months, the gap appears to be widening.

The team of researchers did a similar survey after the first Omicron surge and estimated that about 1.8 million adults likely had Covid between 1 January until the middle of March.

That estimate was about three to four times greater than the official case count during that time, Nash said – markedly lower than the 30-fold difference the researchers are seeing now.

The huge disparity between estimated and official case counts is likely due to a rise in home testing, which is usually not included in official numbers, and pandemic fatigue or lack of information leading some people not to test at all, even if they have symptoms or exposure to the virus.

There is also a “huge disincentive” for many people to get tested for Covid, said Lara Jirmanus, a family physician and clinical instructor at Harvard Medical School. Americans have been told the virus is mild and won’t affect their lives, she said, but if they test positive, they need to stay home from work and school.

“It’s almost as though we’ve created a national ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ Covid policy – and that is a perfect way to promise that Covid will spread rapidly,” she said – especially concerning given as much as 60% of Covid transmission happens from people who never have any symptoms.

Without good data on the true extent of Covid, it’s more difficult to protect against it, experts said.

“We don’t really have a good handle of what’s going on with Covid, and therefore people can’t make decisions about what to do in a surge,” Nash said.

“We’ve been asked by our elected leaders and governments to make the best decisions for us as individuals,” he continued. “Well, what information does an average person refer to when they’re trying to make the best decisions for themselves around Covid precautions?”

Increased monitoring of viruses like Covid – by examining wastewater or conducting surveys, like Nash and his colleagues did – would sound the alarm on future surges and help experts understand how many people may be vulnerable to the virus.

Local and national public health officials need to “give a better picture of what the true Covid burden might be, so that people can make these informed decisions,” Nash said.

People need to be given “clear on-ramps and off-ramps” for precautions as Covid surges and ebbs, Jirmanus said. Instead, “we’re basically just putting ourselves at the risk of this virus and we have no idea what the future holds – the next variant could make people sicker or kill people more quickly.”

Because of the protection offered by vaccines and recovery from previous cases, the hospitalization rate and death toll of this surge is lower than previous waves so far.

But “we’re not at a place where we can confidently say that each of these new variant surges is not going to result in a surge of deaths,” Nash said.

Hospitalization and death are also not the only negative outcomes of cases. “The long Covid threat is going to be something that’s with us for a while, even after hospitalizations and deaths become less of an issue,” Nash said.

Long Covid can occur in an estimated 10 to 30% of cases, and each infection – and reinfection – seems to be “a roll of the dice” for developing long-term health issues, he said.

“It’s very poorly understood, in my view, given how important a public health issue it could be. But it is absolutely high on the list of reasons to avoid Covid infection right now. It’s tragic that this is not something that is discussed as a reason to prevent the impact of a surge.”

Vaccines protect against long Covid by about 15%, new research suggests, underscoring the need for other precautions to prevent infections.

“This idea that we need to return to normal and that’s the most important thing, rather than just actually using mitigation measures to save lives – it’s actually not that hard, and if it were normalized, we could do it,” Jirmanus said.

“To just decide that it’s perfectly fine for everyone to be infected three to four times a year in the future with a new virus whose effects we don’t fully understand is a huge, huge gamble,” she continued. “We just don’t know what Covid could lead to in the future... We’re playing with fire.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 SPD staff shortage hits sexual assault unit
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/seattle-police-staffing-shortage-sexual-assault-investigations/281-4bc6649a-cca9-438c-8f7d-7f5c7025c6c2
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Seattle Police Chief Adrian Diaz said the department's Sexual Assault Unit is about half the size it was just a few years ago, with just five detectives handling all of the cases citywide.</p> <p>A May 2 internal memo between top brass within the department provided by Seattle police states, "we currently have 6 positions not being actively filled due to absences and personnel shortages" in reference to the Sexual Assault Unit.</p>

The department said that is causing the Sexual Assault Unit to triage more heavily than normal with cases where the suspect is in custody, as well as cases involving children and vulnerable adults taking priority.

When it comes to the sexual assault cases detectives refer to the prosecuting attorney's office, that office provided a graph that shows the number of referrals dropping after 2020.

Advocates for sexual assault survivors are concerned because staffing shortages mean there are cases waiting to be assigned to a detective.

Chief Diaz claims he is working to provide more resources.

"I have another detective that will be deployed later on this month in June. I have also been cross assigning cases," Diaz explained. "We have taken some of the sexual assault cases and given it to domestic violence detectives."

Due to staffing shortages, Diaz said the human services department's Victim Support Team is working to contact victims to make sure they are being connected with the resources they need.

The Seattle Police Department has 400 fewer deployable resources than it did four years ago, according to Diaz. An effort to recruit and retain officers is underway, but Diaz says it will take five to 10 years to recover from the huge exodus the department saw in 2020 and 2021.

Riddhi Mukhopadhyay heads the Seattle-based [Sexual Violence Law Center](#), a group that provides legal help for sexual violence survivors.

She said a short-staffed Sexual Assault Unit could have far-reaching effects on survivors who may be afraid of coming forward.

"What this does is, it has a trickle effect. Not only on individual survivors who are coming forward and reporting, but other survivors who haven't spoken out or haven't reported yet," Mukhopadhyay said.

State Senator and King County Senior Deputy Prosecutor Manka Dhingra said the priority needs to be on people.

"When communities want to feel safe, they're concerned about personal safety; about violence against individuals. That is what needs to be prioritized by law enforcement," Dhingra said.

In a statement, Mary Ellen Stone, the CEO of the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center said victims of sexual assault experience a loss of power and control, and only a small portion of victims choose to report their assault to law enforcement.

"When victims are not given basic information about timing, options and next steps in their cases, the system is failing them," Stone said.

Stone questioned what victims gain by reporting their assault if the city lacks the ability to follow through on the investigation.

"If we continue to believe that sexual assault victims should have the opportunity to report to law enforcement about what happened to them, we have an obligation to make it work better for those survivors who put their trust in that system," Stone said.

Stone directed victims to the [King County Sexual Assault Resource Center](#) which provides free, confidential crisis support and comprehensive services to help survivors recover, whether or not they choose to report to law enforcement. Services include a 24-hour Resource Line at 888.998.6423 (888.99.VOICE), legal and general advocacy, trauma-focused therapy and parent/family education.

HEADLINE	06/01 Officials struggle fill vacant lifeguard jobs
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/local-officials-struggling-to-fill-vacant-lifeguard-jobs-as-summer-swimming-season-arrives
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — With the arrival of the warm weather season in Western Washington, many local municipal officials are struggling to fill several lifeguard job vacancies, positions still reckoning with the ongoing effects from the COVID pandemic.</p> <p>Shawn Wruth, beach manager at Lake Meridian Park in Kent, said Wednesday that the challenge to fill his vacant lifeguard jobs became overwhelming.</p> <p>"I couldn't get enough certified staff," he said. "I think we only had two applicants and neither had a lifeguard certification."</p> <p>The widespread shutdown from the coronavirus pandemic created a problem for his staff because many of his employees were leaving for other jobs, he said. When the lockdowns were lifted, beaches were set to reopen but not enough lifeguards returned to safely staff his posts.</p> <p>"I really lost all of my lifeguards in 2021," said Wruth, who declined to return to his management job because of the huge undertaking to have to restart his job hiring efforts from scratch. "Starting a program from the ground up is very difficult," said Wruth. "It takes time."</p> <p>That's essentially the same situation across Western Washington and the country.</p> <p>For example, Seward Park's swimming area was closed last year because Seattle City Parks were unable to adequately staff it.</p> <p>Rachel Schulkin, who works with the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department, said applicants for the lifeguard roles have been few and far between.</p> <p>"We're usually around 420 lifeguards this time of year and we're currently around less than 200," she said, adding that the city will have to once again close some of its beaches. "We're pretty confident we cannot open all the beaches with the lifeguards we have on."</p> <p>Short staffing is a problem so many businesses are facing.</p> <p>But for Schulkin, it's especially difficult when it means limiting spots where people can enjoy Seattle's summer weather.</p> <p>That's why she's hoping that people will go online and apply and get certified so these spots can return to what they looked like in 2019.</p> <p>"What a better way to spend your summer with your feet out on the beach all day and every day?" Schulkin said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 Putin threats highlight new risky nuclear era
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/01/us/politics/nuclear-arms-treaties.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The old nuclear order, rooted in the Cold War's unthinkable outcomes, was fraying before Russia invaded Ukraine. Now, it is giving way to a looming era of disorder unlike any since the beginning of the atomic age.</p> <p>Russia's regular reminders over the past three months of its nuclear might, even if largely bluster, were the latest evidence of how the potential threat has resurfaced in more overt and dangerous ways. They</p>

were enough to draw a pointed warning to Moscow on Tuesday from President Biden in what amounted to a tacit acknowledgment that the world had entered a period of heightened nuclear risks.

“We currently see no indication that Russia has intent to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine, though Russia’s occasional rhetoric to rattle the nuclear saber is itself dangerous and extremely irresponsible,” Mr. Biden wrote in a [guest opinion essay in The New York Times](#). “Let me be clear: Any use of nuclear weapons in this conflict on any scale would be completely unacceptable to us as well as the rest of the world and would entail severe consequences.”

Those consequences, though, would almost certainly be nonnuclear, officials said — a sharp contrast to the kind of threats of nuclear escalation that Washington and Moscow pursued during the Cold War.

Such shifts extend well beyond Russia and include China’s moves to expand its arsenal, the collapse of any hope that North Korea will limit — much less abandon — its cache of nuclear warheads and the emergence of so-called threshold states, like Iran, which are tantalizingly close to being able to build a bomb.

During the Trump administration, the United States and Russia pulled out of arms treaties that had constrained their arsenals. Only one — New START, which limits both sides to 1,550 deployed strategic weapons — was left in place. Then, as the Ukraine war started in February, talks between Washington and Moscow on what might replace the agreement ended abruptly.

With the Biden administration stepping up the flow of [conventional weapons to Ukraine](#) and tensions with Russia high, a senior administration official conceded that “right now it’s almost impossible to imagine” how the talks might resume before the last treaty expires in early 2026.

Last summer, hundreds of new missile silos began appearing in the Chinese desert. The Pentagon declared that Beijing, which had long said it needed only a “minimum deterrent,” was moving to build an arsenal of “at least” 1,000 nuclear arms by 2030.

The commander of United States Strategic Command, the military unit that keeps the nuclear arsenal ready to launch, [said last month](#) that he was worried Beijing was learning lessons from Moscow’s threats over Ukraine and would apply them to Taiwan, which it similarly views as a breakaway state.

The Chinese are “watching the war in Ukraine closely and will likely use nuclear coercion to their advantage” in future conflicts, the commander, Adm. Charles A. Richard, told Congress. Beijing’s aim, he said, “is to achieve the military capability to reunify Taiwan by 2027, if not sooner.”

Other administration officials are more skeptical, noting that Russia’s saber rattling failed to deter the West from arming Ukraine — and that the lesson China may take away is that nuclear threats can backfire.

Others are learning their own lessons. North Korea, which President Donald J. Trump boasted he would disarm with one-on-one diplomacy, is building new weapons.

South Korea, which [Mr. Biden visited](#) last month, is once again [openly debating](#) whether to build a nuclear force to counter the North, a discussion reminiscent of the 1970s, when Washington forced the South to give up a covert bomb program.

In South Korea and beyond, [Ukraine’s renunciation of its nuclear arsenal](#) three decades ago is seen by some as a mistake that left it open to invasion.

Iran has rebuilt much of its nuclear infrastructure since President Donald J. Trump [abandoned the 2015 nuclear agreements](#). Reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency suggest that Tehran can now produce the fuel for a nuclear weapon in weeks, though the warhead would take a year or more.

What is fast approaching, experts say, is a second nuclear age full of new dangers and uncertainties, less predictable than during the Cold War, with established restraints giving way to more naked threats to reach for such weapons — and a need for new strategies to keep the atomic peace.

Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, [argued recently in Foreign Affairs](#) that the dawning era would feature “both a greater risk of a nuclear arms race and heightened incentives for states to resort to nuclear weapons in a crisis.”

Threats of Doom

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia opened the Ukraine war with a declaration that he was [putting his nuclear abilities on some kind of heightened alert](#) — a clear message to Washington to back off. (There is no evidence that he moved any nuclear weapons or loosened the controls on their use, William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, said recently.)

It was the latest expression of a [Putin](#) strategy to remind the world that even if Russia’s economy is about the size of Italy’s and its influence is eclipsed by China’s rise, its nuclear arsenal remains the largest.

In the years leading up to the [Ukraine invasion](#), Mr. Putin regularly punctuated his speeches with nuclear propaganda videos, including [one](#) that showed a swarm of warheads descending on Florida. In March 2018, when he announced the development of a 78-foot-long, [nuclear-armed torpedo](#) meant to cross an ocean and blanket an area larger than California with radioactivity, he [called](#) it “amazing” and “really fantastic” — as an accompanying [video](#) showed it exploding in a gargantuan fireball.

A popular Sunday news show in Russia recently [featured](#) an animation that again showcased the giant torpedo, claiming the weapon could explode with a [force of up to 100 megatons](#) — more than 6,000 times as powerful as the American atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima — and turn Britain “into a radioactive desert.”

It was all a little heavy-handed, even for a bruised Mr. Putin. But inside the Pentagon and the National Security Council, his bluster has focused attention on another part of the Russian arsenal: [tactical or “battlefield” weapons](#), relatively small arms that are not covered by any treaty and are easy to transport. Russia possesses a stockpile of 2,000 or so, 20 times more than NATO’s arsenals.

They are designed by the Russians to blur the distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons, which strategists fear makes their use [more thinkable](#).

In war games and field exercises, Russian troops have simulated the transition from conventional to tactical nuclear weapons as an experiment in scaring off adversaries. In Russian military doctrine, this is called “escalate to de-escalate.”

Preparing a Response

A sign of the risks of this new age has been a series of urgent meetings in the administration to map out how Mr. Biden should respond if Russia conducts a nuclear detonation in Ukraine or around the Black Sea. Officials will not discuss the classified results of those tabletop exercises.

But in public testimony to Congress last month, Avril D. Haines, the director of national intelligence, said that officials believed Mr. Putin would reach for his arsenal only if “he perceives that he is losing the war in Ukraine, and that NATO in effect is either intervening or about to intervene.”

Intelligence officials say they think the chances are low, but that is higher than what anyone was projecting before the invasion.

“There are a lot of things that he would do in the context of escalation before he would get to nuclear weapons,” Ms. Haines said.

The White House, the Pentagon and the intelligence agencies are examining the implications of any potential Russian claim that it is conducting a nuclear test or the use by its forces of a relatively small, battlefield nuclear weapon to demonstrate its ability.

As Mr. Biden's opinion article hinted, his advisers are quietly looking almost entirely at nonnuclear responses — most likely a combination of sanctions, diplomatic efforts and, if a military response is needed, conventional strikes — to any such demonstration of nuclear detonation.

The idea would be to “signal immediate de-escalation” followed by international condemnation, said one administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide insight into classified topics.

“If you respond in kind, you lose the moral high ground and the ability to harness a global coalition,” said Jon B. Wolfsthal, a nuclear expert who was on the National Security Council during the Obama administration.

Mr. Wolfsthal noted that in 2016, the Obama administration [ran a war game](#) in which participants agreed that a nonnuclear response to a Russian strike was the best option. Ms. Haines, then President Barack Obama's deputy national security adviser, ran the simulation.

[Scott D. Sagan](#), a specialist in nuclear strategy at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation, called the development of a nonnuclear response an “extremely important” development.

“The response need not be a response in kind,” he said.

But details matter. A test by Russia over the ocean, where no one dies, might be one thing; one in a Ukrainian city that kills people might result in a different response.

Henry Kissinger noted in a recent [interview with The Financial Times](#) that “there's almost no discussion internationally about what would happen if the weapons actually became used.” He added: “We are now living in a totally new era.”

A New Chinese Puzzle

For decades, Beijing was satisfied with having a few hundred nuclear weapons to assure that it could not be attacked — and that it would retain a “second strike” ability in case nuclear weapons were used against it.

When satellite images began showing [new intercontinental ballistic missile silos](#) being dug on the edge of the Gobi Desert last year, it set off a debate in the Pentagon and U.S. intelligence agencies about what China's leader, Xi Jinping, intended, especially at a time when he appeared to be steering toward a confrontation over Taiwan.

The simplest theory is that if China is going to be a superpower, it needs a superpower-sized arsenal. But another is that Beijing recognizes that all the familiar theories of nuclear balance of power are eroding.

“China is heralding a paradigm shift to something much less stable,” Mr. Krepinevich wrote, “a tripolar nuclear system.”

Administration officials say that every time the subject is raised, their Chinese counterparts make clear they will not discuss entering arms control agreements. As a result, they are unclear about Mr. Xi's intentions. For example, might China extend the protection of its nuclear arsenal over other states it is trying to lure into its orbit?

	<p>All this is the subject of a classified study that the Pentagon recently sent to Congress. But so far, none of it has been openly debated.</p> <p>“Everybody’s scurrying for a nuclear umbrella and, if they can’t get that, thinking about getting their own weapons,” said David Albright, the president of the Institute for Science and International Security, a private group in Washington that tracks the spread of nuclear arms.</p> <p>He called the Middle East prime territory for further atomic ambitions. As Iran has inched toward a bomb, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have talked publicly about the possibility of matching whatever Tehran does.</p> <p>“They’re up to something,” Mr. Albright said of Saudi Arabia, “and they’re rich.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/02 UK celebrates Queen Elizabeth in jubilee
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/02/world/queen-elizabeth-jubilee
GIST	<p>LONDON — Queen Elizabeth celebrates 70 years on the British throne — her Platinum Jubilee — with four days of festivities that begin Thursday with a military parade featuring hundreds of Army musicians, 240 horses, a Royal Air Force flyover, a gun salute and the royal family’s appearance on the balcony of Buckingham Palace.</p> <p>The ostensible purpose of all this pageantry is to celebrate the queen’s 96th birthday, which was back in April.</p> <p>But the show of military grandeur, known as Trooping the Color, also symbolizes Elizabeth’s status as the commander in chief of the British armed forces. That link has been sacred to her since she served in the auxiliary service as a driver and truck mechanic during World War II, when she was a young princess.</p> <p>It is not clear how much the queen will take part in the jubilee celebrations, given her frail condition and the problems she has had walking recently. But the palace has left little doubt that she intends to turn up on the balcony, the ultimate royal photo opportunity and the emotional highlight of the jubilee. She is also scheduled to lead the lighting of the Platinum Jubilee Beacon on Thursday evening from Windsor Castle, in a dual ceremony with her grandson Prince William.</p> <p>Buckingham Palace sought to head off weeks of press speculation by disclosing last month that the queen will be joined at the front of the palace by a streamlined version of the royal family.</p> <p>Among those who will not get a coveted spot next to her are Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, who relinquished their royal duties and moved to Southern California in 2020, and Prince Andrew, who has been put into internal exile because of his links to Jeffrey Epstein, the deceased financier and convicted sex offender.</p> <p>The thinner ranks at Buckingham Palace fulfill a longtime strategy by Prince Charles to reduce the number of working royals — a concession to changing times and growing public resistance to the cost of supporting the royals.</p> <p>That the queen has made it to her Platinum Jubilee at all is the major story line of the week. She contracted the coronavirus in February and has talked about how the ordeal left her exhausted. She lost her husband, Prince Philip, last year, and her fragile health has forced her to cancel multiple public appearances, including a remembrance service for the war dead and the state opening of Parliament.</p> <p>That is a heavy blow for a monarch who has lived by the mantra that she had to be “seen to be believed.” But Elizabeth has looked spry in recent appearances at the Royal Windsor Horse Show and the Chelsea Flower Show, raising hopes that the jubilee may yet be a joyful commemoration rather than a wistful twilight.</p>

Return to Top	SCHEDULE OF EVENTS Here's what's happening over the four days of jubilee festivities, and how to watch.
HEADLINE	06/01 Relief, anxiety as Shanghai mostly reopens
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/01/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#shanghai-covid-lockdown-eases
GIST	<p>They strolled and cycled through their own city like dazed tourists. They hopped onto ferries once again, crossing the Huangpu River, and crowded onto the famed Bund waterfront. They honked car horns and lit fireworks.</p> <p>As Shanghai eased one of the longest, toughest lockdowns anywhere since the pandemic began, many of its 25 million residents celebrated being free to move around. The reopening on Wednesday came after Shanghai's two-month siege against Covid had set off public anger over shortages of food and medicine as well as the harsh enforcement of quarantine rules.</p> <p>For now at least, that anger gave way to relief after the government wound back many restrictions. During the day, people — all wearing masks — basked in the novelty of previously mundane pleasures like meeting friends and relatives, strolling in parks, and driving through streets that had been largely empty since early April. Hairdressers were, as in many cities freed from lockdowns, busy. Subway lines were open but quiet.</p> <p>"Everyone had these problems at the time and felt a bit confounded about what to do," said Tang Xianchun, a Shanghai resident. Earlier in the lockdown, she had been irate about dwindling supplies and residents with chronic illnesses being denied entry to hospitals, sometimes with deadly consequences.</p> <p>"But those problems came to be resolved, and now everyone is feeling good that the restrictions are lifting," Ms. Tang said in a telephone interview. "I'm more eager to catch up with family and friends, chat and meet face to face. That's what I missed most."</p> <p>Shanghai ordered residents to stay home and businesses to shut from early April to try to stifle the spread of the Omicron variant. City leaders had initially said they could contain the outbreak with limited restrictions. But China's leader, Xi Jinping, and other top officials ordered tougher measures as infections climbed to more than 20,000 each day.</p> <p>With daily infections now falling to low double digits, the government has launched an urgent effort to revive factories, companies and supply lines vital to China's sagging economy. On Tuesday, Shanghai recorded 15 infections.</p> <p>"The task of speeding up the economic and social recovery is increasingly urgent," Shanghai city leaders said in a letter to residents. "We will put all our energy into fully restoring regular production and life."</p> <p>Yet even as the authorities eased the lockdown, they retained some major restrictions on movement, such as checkpoints for entering housing compounds. And despite the economic and social pain of lockdowns, China's leaders have insisted on sticking with their strategy of eliminating virtually all Covid cases. That has left many residents and business owners in Shanghai wondering: What does going back to normal mean? How long will it last?</p> <p>"I feel like that harm from the pandemic measures is worse than the harm of the virus itself. Everyone's really stir crazy after two months locked up," Summer Wang, a graduate student in Shanghai, said in an interview. "Now I always want to be ready at any time with about two months of supplies so I can have some sense of security."</p>

The uncertainty and anxiety about the future could impede Shanghai's — and China's — recovery. Officials have been cautiously lifting some restrictions on residents and selected companies since midway through May.

China's economy slowed sharply in April and May, in large part because of Shanghai's lockdown. The restrictions have also hurt many shops and small businesses, which are big generators of jobs. Over 10 million students in Chinese universities, many in Shanghai, are about to graduate and enter the job market.

The Shanghai lockdown also set off small-scale protests by residents and dissent that unsettled Communist Party officials, vigilant against any signs of discontent.

Some residents banged pots and pans at night to vent their anger. They shared a [mournful six-minute video](#), "Voices of April," that chronicled suffering during the lockdown. Some lawyers and academics — sizable groups in this heavily middle-class city — [called for rethinking](#) the "zero Covid" strategy that Mr. Xi put in place after the pandemic took off in Wuhan, central China, in early 2020.

"You feel like you're carrying a really heavy weight on your life," Vera Liu, an academic in Shanghai, said in an interview. She said that she and her husband had discussed moving back to the United States, where they both received their doctoral degrees.

"All of our parents and relatives are here and they are getting old," she said. "But after this lockdown, as a parent, I have to seek a better option for my son."

Despite the easing, hundreds of thousands of Shanghai residents remain locked in their housing compounds because of recent infections in their areas. Under China's stringent rules, being in the vicinity of a confirmed infection is enough to land someone in a quarantine facility.

People must still undergo regular Covid testing to use public transport or enter many public places. Many company managers and shop owners are uncertain how to restore business to full capacity when Covid policies, including testing rules, still hold back the movement of workers and goods within and beyond the city.

"It felt like running a marathon; you thought you were close to the finish, but then there was another mountain to cross," Yang Benli, a co-owner of a chain of cafes in Shanghai, said of the darkest days of the lockdown. "Our vegetable and steak suppliers haven't fully restored deliveries yet, but mainly it's because of staffing shortages, as Shanghai still has locked down areas."

The uncertainty also hangs over many companies and multinationals with offices and operations in Shanghai. The city and surrounding Yangtze River delta region are an artery of the Chinese economy, creating a big share of its manufactured goods, high tech, exports and tax revenues.

Huang Changming, a manager of a garment company with offices in Shanghai and a factory outside the city, said getting back to normal production could take two months. "As long as Shanghai gets back to work, other areas will do the same."

Still, Eric Zheng, the president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, said: "It's going to take a while for companies to resume 'normal' — that's quote-unquote normal — operations."

"It's a gradual process to bring people back and there's all the logistics bottlenecks," he said in a telephone interview. "Are your suppliers in a position to resume normal operations? That's another big question."

Despite those doubts, the reopening of Shanghai will come as a relief to Mr. Xi, who is set to claim a third five-year term as China's leader at a Communist Party congress later this year.

Mr. Xi and other Chinese officials maintain that their zero-tolerance strategy has spared the country the millions of deaths that the virus has inflicted in the United States, Europe and other richer countries. China

	<p>has officially recorded 5,226 deaths from Covid, though the real number is probably higher, because China typically classifies Covid-related deaths more narrowly than many other countries. Shanghai has counted 588 deaths from the recent outbreak.</p> <p>Yu Zhonghuan, a retired engineer in Shanghai, said he would use his new freedom to press officials to explain how his wife died. Doctors said she had suffered from a lung infection, but he believed that she succumbed to Covid in late April after being infected with the coronavirus while in hospital.</p> <p>“Even if they ignore me, I want to go and find the coroner’s office to demand an autopsy,” he said by telephone. “I don’t hold out any hopes, I know suing won’t produce results, but I’ll just keep pushing.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 South Africa infections despite antibodies
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/01/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#omicron-south-africa-antibodies
GIST	<p>Coronavirus infections surged in South Africa in recent months despite research suggesting that about 98 percent of the population had some antibodies from vaccination, previous infection, or both.</p> <p>The study, released Thursday but not yet peer reviewed, analyzed the prevalence of two types of antibodies in 3,395 blood donors collected mid-March across the country in order to estimate prevalence at the national level. It found that by that time, about 87 percent of the population had likely been infected with the coronavirus. About 11 percent had antibodies that, according to the study’s authors, suggest that a person had been vaccinated but not recently infected.</p> <p>But though the vast majority of the South African population had antibodies against the virus, many still became infected in the latest virus wave, which began in April and was driven by BA.4 and BA.5, new subvariants of Omicron.</p> <p>As the wave peaked in late May, confirmed new cases of the virus averaged more than 7,000 a day, according to the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. New daily deaths also rose, averaging about 50 per day, but remained far below the peak of South Africa’s second wave in January 2021, when, according to the data, an average of more than 500 people were dying per day.</p> <p>The researchers say the study provides yet more evidence of the capacity of the virus to evolve and dodge immunity.</p> <p>“All of these antibodies that we found did not provide a lot of protection against being infected by the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants of Omicron,” said Alex Welte, a professor of epidemiology at Stellenbosch University and the lead analyst of the study.</p> <p>Whatever is slightly different about those variants was enough to sidestep some of the body’s defenses, he added. “At this point we are not able to contain the spread; that’s the sobering takeaway.”</p> <p>BA.4 and BA.5 are thought to spread more quickly than BA.2, which itself was more contagious than the original Omicron variant.</p> <p>Jeffrey Shaman, an infectious disease modeler and epidemiologist at Columbia University in New York, said it was possible that the number of those who had been infected with the virus in South Africa could be even higher than 87 percent, accounting for varying immune responses among different individuals.</p> <p>But he and other scientists who were not involved in the study said that its findings aligned with a growing body of evidence that the coronavirus has become more adept at reinfecting people, and that outbreaks around the world are likely to continue to reoccur for the foreseeable future.</p>

	<p>“We have to admit the possibility that the number of waves that we’ve seen over the past few years, it may continue at that cadence,” Dr. Shaman said.</p> <p>Dr. Richard Lessells, an infectious diseases specialist at the KwaZulu-Natal Research and Innovation Sequencing Platform in South Africa who was not involved in the research, said that the findings were consistent with other epidemiological data that the vast majority of South Africans had likely already been exposed to the virus at the time of the study.</p> <p>Populations in other countries such as Britain, he added, also had extremely high levels of antibodies against the virus. But, he said, more variants would likely continue to emerge around the world, causing outbreaks of infections even among those with antibodies.</p> <p>“The virus will continue to evolve so that it can continue to spread in the population,” Dr. Lessells said. “It doesn’t end,” he added. “This virus is with us for the rest of time.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 Cabinet secretaries test positive for Covid
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/01/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases#martin-walsh-positive-coronavirus
GIST	<p>Labor Secretary Martin J. Walsh and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland are the latest members of President Biden’s cabinet to be infected with the coronavirus.</p> <p>Mr. Walsh said Tuesday on Twitter that he had tested positive that day, and added that he was experiencing only mild symptoms. “I’m grateful to be both vaccinated and boosted,” he wrote.</p> <p>He said he was isolating himself and following guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “I look forward to a quick recovery,” he wrote.</p> <p>Mr. Biden was not considered a close contact of either Mr. Walsh or Ms. Haaland under C.D.C. guidelines, a White House spokesman said Wednesday.</p> <p>A person is considered a close contact when they have been less than six feet away from an infected person for a total of at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period, according to the C.D.C.</p> <p>Mr. Walsh had not been around Mr. Biden in the past week, a Labor Department spokeswoman said Wednesday. It was not clear whether Mr. Walsh, 55, had gotten a second booster dose of a coronavirus vaccine.</p> <p>Later Wednesday, Ms. Haaland said on Twitter that she had also tested positive.</p> <p>“I feel fine and am grateful to be fully vaccinated and twice boosted,” she said. “I hope everyone stays current on their vaccinations so that, if they are exposed, they too will have milder symptoms.”</p> <p>Several people in Mr. Biden’s inner circle have tested positive for the virus in the past month, including Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, and Susan Rice, the White House domestic policy adviser. Mr. Biden’s daughter, Ashley Biden, also became infected in mid-May.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 Ukraine soldiers are under relentless fire
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/01/world/europe/ukraine-russia-losses-east.html
GIST	KRAMATORSK, Ukraine — It all starts with a whistle, said Vladislav Goncharenko, a Ukrainian army sergeant, describing the relentless Russian shelling.

“You lie in a trench,” he said, waiting in an ambulance packed with other wounded soldiers. “There are very loud explosions. You want to get deeper into the ground. And you have shrapnel whistling above you, like flies.”

Soldiers, he said, “just want it to stop.”

Though much of the world’s focus in the war has been on Russia’s disorganized and flawed campaign, Ukraine, too, is struggling. Ukraine’s army has suffered heavy losses, shown signs of disarray and, step by step, fallen back from some long-held areas in Donbas, the eastern region that is now the war’s epicenter.

The momentum Ukraine generated after pushing Russian forces back from Kyiv, the capital, and Kharkiv, the second-largest city, has given way in the east to weeks of give-and-take over villages, heavy shelling — and a stream of Ukrainian dead and wounded from the battlefields.

Ukraine’s troops now face a Russian force that has shifted strategy from the hasty, reckless advances of the early weeks of the war to a creeping, grinding march enabled by massive artillery bombardments.

On Wednesday, Russian forces advanced in street fighting in the ruins of the city of Sievierodonetsk, a key target of their offensive. A local official said on Wednesday that Russian forces controlled about 70 percent of the city, where only about 12,000 residents remain out of a prewar population of 100,000 after weeks of intense shelling.

Ukrainian soldiers there are at risk of being surrounded. With bridges over the Seversky Donets River destroyed or under fire, resupply has become tenuous.

Ukrainian officials have been candid about the army’s travails while arguing more rapid deliveries of Western weaponry will resolve them. Every day in the current heavy fighting, President Volodymyr Zelensky said in an interview with Newsmax this week, 60 to 100 Ukrainian soldiers are killed and another about 500 soldiers are wounded in combat.

In his nightly address, Mr. Zelensky acknowledged the battle for control of the Donbas region was “very difficult” but emphasized that his troops were having success in the south, near Kherson and around Zaporizhzhia, and around Kharkiv in the northeast.

“The frontline situation must be assessed comprehensively,” he said. “Not by one area, where there is the most tough situation and which attracts the most attention, but by the whole frontline.”

To fill gaps in the frontline, Ukraine has resorted to deploying minimally trained volunteers of the Territorial Defense Force, which mobilized quickly as the war started. Hints of morale lapses have surfaced. One unit recorded a video protesting dire conditions. In interviews, soldiers said their artillery guns sometimes go quiet for lack of ammunition.

“Those people who said that the war would end very soon, that we have already won, that we will celebrate in April, said a dangerous thing,” Ukraine’s national security adviser, Oleksiy Danilov, told Ukrainian media this week.

In the messy seesaw fighting on the East’s rolling plains, Ukrainian forces are buoyed by the promise of Western weapons arriving soon.

On Tuesday, President Biden announced plans to give Ukraine multiple rocket launch systems, a powerful, long-range artillery weapon. U.S. and Ukrainian officials have said the systems are not intended to strike targets within Russia.

On Wednesday, Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany promised to send a sophisticated air defense system and a tracking radar capable of locating Russian artillery. Mr. Scholz had faced criticism from Ukraine and

some German lawmakers that he had not done enough to support Ukraine's military. He did not announce a timeline for the new shipments.

With the arrival of new weapons systems weeks away at best, it's unclear if they will land in Ukraine in time to repel the Russians' slow advance. Last week, Ukraine was forced from positions it had defended through eight years of war with Russian-backed separatists near the town of Svitlodarsk.

Throughout the war, the state of the Ukrainian military has been difficult to assess from publicly available sources. As the war began, the Ukrainian military had about 30,000 troops deployed in the Donbas region, but neither the government nor the military will provide a current figure.

The Ukrainian government has largely withheld casualty figures and Western governments have not volunteered their own assessments of the army's difficulties, as they have in describing Russian setbacks. The last Ukrainian casualty update came on April 16, when Mr. Zelensky said fewer than 3,000 soldiers had died, but his comments about casualties last week suggest the figure is far higher now.

Ukraine is also hampered by the deterioration and depletion of its Soviet-legacy artillery, said Mykhailo Zhirokhov, the author of a book on Ukrainian artillery. The worn barrels fire less accurately. Shells are running low. Western replacements are arriving, but slowly.

The morale of volunteer fighters is also proving to be a challenge, at least in some units. Many who signed up to Ukraine's Territorial Defense Force in the first days of war believed their task would be limited to defending their hometowns. There were teachers, computer programmers, taxi drivers and others, most with no battlefield experience.

Now they find themselves deployed into vicious combat in the East, an indication of Ukraine's mounting demand for frontline fighters.

A law passed on May 3, after many volunteers had already enlisted, allowed their deployment to combat outside their home regions.

Some are trained only after arriving at the front to fire heavy machine guns, anti-tank missiles and grenade launchers, because the weapons are only available there, Serhiy Sabko, the head of the Territorial Defense Force general staff, told Ukrainian media last month. "We are forced to carry out additional training" near the front, he said.

Meanwhile, the strain on military families is showing.

In Lviv, a city in the West that has avoided serious shelling, wives and mothers of men in the 103rd Territorial Defense Brigade have protested, terrified about their husbands' and sons' deployment into combat in the East. To assuage concerns, a commander, Vitaliy Kupriy, met with about 200 women in a concert hall but the conversation devolved into screaming and crying, local media reported.

In interviews in ambulances as they were evacuated from the front, about a dozen wounded Ukrainian soldiers said artillery was the cause of most casualties. They echoed appeals of Ukrainian officials for the West to transfer more long-range artillery to counter Russian bombardment.

"It's a weapon that I, as a rifleman, cannot fight," Sergeant Goncharenko said of Russian artillery.

He was wounded in a barrage on the northern rim of the front around Sievierodonetsk that knocked a tree over the trench he was sheltering in. He suffered a concussion that left him dizzy, vomiting and unable to fight.

The Russians mix artillery barrages with probing maneuvers by infantry or armored vehicles, identifying new targets by approaching Ukrainian lines and drawing fire. The maneuver is called "reconnaissance until contact."

Ukrainians open fire on the probing Russians, causing casualties. “We collect their dead,” Sergeant Goncharenko said.

But then, having ascertained Ukrainian positions, he said, the Russians “pull back and fire artillery.”

Russia has paid heavy costs as well. On Tuesday American officials estimated that the Russian military’s overall fighting strength had been diminished by about 20 percent. In late March, NATO estimated that 7,000 to 15,000 Russian troops had been killed.

Still, Russia’s artillery has devastated towns and cities ahead of the advance and prompted about 80 percent of the population of Ukrainian-controlled areas in the Donbas to flee. Russian soldiers wind up taking ruins.

“The only way they will occupy Donbas is reducing it to rubble,” said Maria Zolkina, a political analyst. “If they capture Donbas, it will be without cities” or people.

Some military analysts see no clear end for now, and Antony J. Blinken, the U.S. secretary of state, on Wednesday predicted “many months of conflict” ahead. Russia is unlikely to soon capture the claimed borders of two separatists states whose independence it recognized in February. And Ukraine seems far from ready for a counterattack to turn the tide.

“This is a war where territory is going to change hands, there’s no logical stopping point in the conflict and there’s no stalemate,” Michael Kofman, the director of Russian studies at C.N.A., a research institute in Arlington, Va., said in a telephone interview. “This is going to be a longer war.”

Sergeant Bohdan Yermak, whose lungs were damaged by the blast wave when a tank shell exploded nearby, said Ukrainian commanders sometimes call for strikes but artillery batteries cannot fulfill the orders for lack of ammunition. “They say they are saving ammunition for a rainy day,” he said.

Long-range weapons and ammunition and related military aid packages from the United States and European allies will help, he said, based on his experience at the front.

For now, said Sergeant Mykola Pokotila, who was wounded in a battle north of the town of Sloviansk, Ukrainian soldiers in the East are beleaguered, enduring punishing artillery barrages. “I’ve never seen such hell.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Fish for free anywhere in WA 11-12 June
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article262048082.html
GIST	<p>Anyone may fish for free — no license required — across Washington state on June 11-12.</p> <p>A Discover Pass to park at Washington state parks, state Department of Fish and Wildlife land, and state Department of Natural Resources land also will not be required that weekend.</p> <p>Washington has a free fishing weekend each year on the first weekend after the first Monday in June to help introduce people to fishing.</p> <p>There also will be no two-pole endorsements required that weekend. The endorsements allow anglers to use two fishing rods on most freshwater lakes, ponds, some sections of rivers and a few marine areas.</p> <p>However, other fishing regulations apply, including size limits, bag limits, catch record card requirements and some fishing area closures.</p>

	<p>Catch cards are required for salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, halibut and Puget Sound Dungeness crab. They can be picked up at places where fishing licenses are sold.</p> <p>For all fishing regulations, go to wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations. More information, including places where trout have recently been stocked, go to wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/free.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 Calif. report: reparations Black Americans
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/06/01/black-american-reparations-california/
GIST	<p>California's first-in-the-nation task force on reparations for Black Americans said it has documented 170 years of systemic discrimination by the state and demanded "comprehensive reparations" for those harmed by that history of government-sanctioned oppression.</p> <p>In a 500-page report released Wednesday, a legislatively-mandated task force argues that the present-day wealth gap between Black and White Americans in California and the rest of the country is the direct result of slavery, Jim Crow laws, redlining, and other government policies that locked Black Americans into failing schools and over-policed communities.</p> <p>"Segregation, racial terror, harmful racist neglect, and other atrocities in nearly every sector of civil society have inflicted harms, which cascade over a lifetime and compound over generations," the report said.</p> <p>The task force called its work, an interim report, the most extensive document on government discrimination against the Black community since the landmark 1968 Kerner Commission report.</p> <p>It called for the creation of a government office to address past harms and potential future ones, and help eligible Black Californians through a reparations program. But it does not put a price tag on its recommendations; that is expected to be detailed later in a second report.</p> <p>The report recounted a history of California's mistreatment of Black Americans stemming back to its founding. While California was admitted to the union as a free state, the report points out that the state passed and enforced a fugitive slave law that required the return of enslaved people who sought freedom there.</p> <p>The report also cites the extensive history of "sundown towns" in California, communities that prohibited Black Americans from living within their boundaries; the report says that many suburban communities outside of Los Angeles and San Francisco, and most Orange County cities, were once "sundown towns." It also documents the history of urban renewal and highway projects that dismantled once thriving Black neighborhoods like San Francisco's Fillmore District, effectively destroying generations of wealth accumulation.</p> <p>Committee members themselves said they were at odds on whether direct cash payments are politically feasible in the state. The report, issued in conjunction with the state's Department of Justice, lands in a Sacramento awash with cash. Gov. Gavin Newsom's proposed budget included a \$97.5 billion surplus, but the Democrat also has faced demands for refunds for taxpayers, and other programs have a call on specific sums of money.</p> <p>Even supporters admit the campaign for reparations faces an uphill battle in a state where just 6% of the population identifies as Black and where voters recently rejected a move to bring back affirmative action.</p> <p>"I'm hoping that this report is used as an education tool and an organizing tool, educating the state of California and the United States at large about the harms against the African American community and the contributions of the African American community in the United States," said Kamilah Moore, chair of the task force. "This report is documenting the full corpus of evidence around the harms against the African American community, which will substantiate the claims for reparations in the final report."</p>

The interim report comes halfway through the two-year term of the state's reparations task force. It was created in 2020 by legislation championed by then-Assembly member Shirley Weber, a Democrat who has since become the first African American to serve as California's secretary of state.

California's work comes as the idea of reparations has entered the mainstream of the political conversation. More than three decades after it was first introduced in Congress, a House bill that would create a federal commission to study reparations for Black Americans has enough votes to pass on the floor, its key champions say. With odds against the bill in the evenly split Senate, supporters are pushing President Joe Biden to sign an executive order that would create a commission resembling California's task force.

A 2021 Washington Post poll found that 65% of Americans opposed the idea of cash reparations to Black Americans. A plurality of Democrats — 46% — favored the idea, while over 90% of Republicans opposed it. Two-thirds of Black respondents supported reparations, but only 18% of White respondents did. While a majority still oppose reparations, the numbers of those who support the idea is up markedly from past polls. A 1999 ABC News poll found that just 19% of Americans approved of reparations for Black Americans.

"This has to be a political campaign on top of a matter of policy and any sort of moral argument," said James Lance Taylor, a political-science professor at the University of San Francisco and a member of the city of San Francisco's reparations task force. "Anything in favor of expanding rights to Black people has always been negatively received. The odds are always against us, but we are further along than we've ever been."

Much of the thorniest work for the task force remains to be done. After months of debate, in March, the task force voted 5-4 to limit cash reparations only to people who can show that they are descended from Black Americans who were in the country before the turn of the 20th century. But broader questions about the size and scope of a cash reparations — and if they are even possible — remain unanswered.

"I personally feel, this is just me, this is just my perspective, that white folks ain't going to give Black folks no money to put in their pockets," said the Rev. Amos Brown, the task force's vice chair and pastor of Third Baptist Church in San Francisco's Fillmore District. "But if we can get programmatic solutions in areas where we can quantify the gap and show that the state is responsible, in areas like education, economics, and our cultural enclaves, if we can get some form of reparations along those lines, than I think we will have done a job well done."

But Chris Lodgson — an organizer with the Coalition For A Just and Equitable California, an advocacy group that helped write the bill calling for the task force and that continues to work closely with the commission by running listening sessions — said cash payments are a must.

"We're of the position that if it isn't direct compensation, it ain't reparations," Lodgson said. "So crafting actual proposals that rely very heavily on direct financial compensation is the big challenge for us over the next year, but I'm confident that we will do it."

Supporters remain optimistic that they can find a path.

"California has shown the way on a number of big issues that were just as difficult as reparations, namely marriage equality and marijuana legalization, so if there's any place that can initiate a similar kind of effect around the issue reparations it's California," Taylor said. "It's the largest state in the union. It's politically important, and it represents a kind of promise to the rest of America that no matter how outrageous the sort of backlash politics are, there's a blue wall of California."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Tesla, SpaceX return to office or get out
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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/elon-musks-ultimatum-to-tesla-execs-return-to-the-office-or-get-out/
GIST	<p><i>Bloomberg News</i> - The world's richest man has had it with this whole working-from-home business.</p> <p>Tesla CEO Elon Musk sent an email late Tuesday to "Everybody" at his electric-car company and SpaceX — the rocket company he runs — elaborating on an earlier missive to executive staff about the need to be in the office. Employees at numerous companies, used to working from home or in a hybrid situation, have revolted against "RTO" policies and long commutes.</p> <p>"Everyone at Tesla is required to spend a minimum of 40 hours in the office per week," Musk wrote in an email titled "To be super clear." "Moreover, the office must be where your actual colleagues are located, not some remote pseudo office. If you don't show up, we will assume you have resigned."</p> <p>Bloomberg News confirmed that current Tesla employees received the email Wednesday morning.</p> <p>"The more senior you are, the more visible must be your presence," Musk wrote. "That is why I lived in the factory so much — so that those on the line could see me working alongside them. If I had not done that, Tesla would long ago have gone bankrupt."</p> <p>Earlier, Musk sent an email to executive staff requiring that they be in "a main Tesla office, not a remote branch office unrelated to the job duties, for example being responsible for Fremont factory human relations, but having your office be in another state."</p> <p>In recent weeks, Musk has praised Tesla China employees for "burning the 3 am oil" while saying that Americans are "trying to avoid going to work at all."</p> <p>Thousands of Tesla staff in Shanghai have been effectively locked in for months, working 12-hour shifts, six days a week. Until recently, many were sleeping on the factory floor as part of a closed-loop system meant to keep COVID-19 out and cars rolling off the production line.</p> <p>Workers brought in to bring the factory back up to speed are being shuttled between the facility and sleeping quarters — either unused factories or an old military camp — with day- and night-shift workers sharing beds in makeshift dorms.</p> <p>When a fan on Twitter asked Musk to address people who think going into work is an antiquated concept, he replied "They should pretend to work somewhere else."</p> <p>It's not the first time Musk's tough-love treatment of employees has come up.</p> <p>Roughly two weeks before Musk reached a \$44 billion deal to acquire Twitter, Keith Rabois, a Silicon Valley venture capitalist and entrepreneur, tweeted an anecdote that speaks to his friend's management style. At SpaceX, Musk once noticed a group of interns milling around while waiting in a line for coffee.</p> <p>Musk threatened to fire them all if it happened again, and had security cameras installed to monitor compliance, according to Rabois, who knows Tesla's founder from their days at PayPal Holdings Inc.</p> <p>Employees at Twitter — one of the most prominent companies to allow permanent remote work — are "in for a rude awakening," Rabois wrote in April.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Job openings decline but remain high
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/politics-993b354e2b37b19e1cc401290b47036e
GIST	WASHINGTON (AP) — The white-hot demand for U.S. workers cooled a bit in April, though the number of unfilled jobs remains high and companies are still desperate to hire more people.

Employers advertised 11.4 million jobs at the end of April, the Labor Department said Wednesday, down from nearly 11.9 million in March, the highest level on records that date back more than 20 years. At that level, there are nearly two job openings for every unemployed person. That's a sharp reversal from the historic pattern: Before the pandemic, there were always more unemployed people than available jobs.

The number of people quitting their jobs remained near record highs at 4.4 million in April, mostly unchanged from the previous month. Nearly all of those who quit do so to take another job, typically for higher pay.

The historically high number of unfilled jobs and the number of people quitting has forced employers to pay more to attract and keep staff. Those trends are driving solid wage gains for America's workers, particularly those that switch jobs.

The figures also suggest that hiring remains strong. On Friday, the government will release the monthly jobs report. Economists believe employers added 323,000 jobs in May, and that the unemployment rate ticked down to 3.5%, matching its pre-pandemic low, from 3.6%.

The healthy level of open jobs shows that companies are still trying to add staff and grow, even as inflation hovers near a 40-year high and the Federal Reserve has embarked on what could be its fastest pace of interest rate hikes since the 1980s.

"Employers' focus is on expansion despite high inflation and pending higher interest rates," said Robert Frick, an economist at the Navy Federal Credit Union.

Yet higher pay also means many companies must raise prices to cover at least part of their higher labor costs, adding to inflation pressures, which Americans increasingly cite as a top concern.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has targeted the high level of available jobs and hopes that by raising interest rates, the Fed can slow demand for workers and bring down the number of openings. Powell and other Fed officials have said their goal is to reduce openings and therefore slow wage increases to cool inflation, potentially without forcing many layoffs.

Job openings fell in restaurants and hotels, though remain quite high, and also dropped in health care and retail. They rose in manufacturing, warehousing, and construction. Construction firms have cited worker shortages for months as a key reason new home building has been delayed.

There are other signs that suggest job openings have leveled off or even declined a bit in recent months. The job listings website Indeed, which tracks all online job postings, says that recent job postings — those seven days old or less — peaked in February but remain high. In February, they were 90% above pre-pandemic levels, but by the third week of May, that figure had fallen to 74% — still a strong increase.

Some of the largest companies that have done the most hiring since the pandemic began have started to pull back. Amazon said last month that its warehouses were "overstaffed" and suggested the company would stop hiring.

Walmart executives made similar comments last month, citing "overstaffing" as part of the reason it fell short of profit projections in the most recent quarter. The company said it resolved the problem largely by not replacing workers who left.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/31 Drought ravaging across the Horn of Africa
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/world/drought-ravaging-east-africa-bankrupts-farmers-empties-schools/

Bloomberg - Bloated livestock carcasses and sun-bleached bones litter the parched landscape around Garissa in eastern Kenya, the epicenter of a humanitarian and environmental crisis that's unfolding across the Horn of Africa.

The worst drought in at least four decades and sweltering temperatures have depleted the area's rivers and dams, driven thousands of destitute farmers from their lands and left those that remain reliant on pumps, boreholes and trucked-in water supplies. School attendance has plummeted and children as young as six are sent to get water, rolling yellow plastic drums for miles to collection points.

Aden Olow is among those who've been forced from their homes. After losing his 20th goat to the drought in late February, he set off from his village of Nunow near Garissa with the remains of his small herd in search of grazing in neighboring Somalia, leaving his wife, Mumina Mohammed, to look after their nine children. She's had to borrow money from local store owners to support the family.

"It's a very heavy responsibility to raise all these children alone. All of them need food and it's very stressful," Mohammed, 30, said in an interview. "Whenever there is rain, I'll expect my husband will come back."

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned that global warming, caused by greenhouse gas emissions, is leading to more extreme weather events and African nations are among those that will face heightened food and water insecurity. At least 16 million people are already at risk across Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, according to the United Nations, and the threat of famine is clearly evident.

While Kenya typically gets most of its rainfall between March and June and some showers between October and December, weather patterns have begun to change. Many areas haven't had sufficient water since late 2020, and there is no indication when the drought will break.

Cereal production across northern Kenya and southern Somalia was halved last year, and many cattle, goat and camel herds were decimated. Russia's war on Ukraine has made a terrible situation even worse, pushing up grain and fuel prices, and raising aid costs for governments whose coffers had already been depleted by the coronavirus pandemic.

This month, Kenya waived import duty on 540,000 tons of corn to address what Treasury Secretary Ukur Yutani described as an impending crisis, and President Uhuru Kenyatta increased the minimum wage by 12% to cushion workers against rising prices of grain, cooking oil and other staples.

The government is doing its best to help more than 210,000 people impacted by the drought in the vicinity of Garissa, about 350 kilometers (217 miles) northeast of the capital, Nairobi, delivering water by truck to far-flung locations, according to Shukri Fiyat, a spokesman for the Kenya's National Drought Management Authority.

"The work is continuous and draining resources," he said.

But Sharmake Mohamed, who heads the North Eastern Conservancies Association, a group of wildlife conservancies in Garissa and nearby Wajir and Mandera, accused the authorities of not doing enough to safeguard the well-being of herders and their families, who account for about a fifth of Kenya's 55 million people and occupy more than 70% of its land mass. More money needs to be invested in agriculture and mitigating against climate change, he said.

"This country is sitting on a time bomb," Mohamed said. "We need to look at the repercussions of the pastoralist community being ignored."

In Nunow, more than a quarter of the men have left and many children have left school because their families can't afford the fees, said Mohammed Dawud, the chairman of the community of about 300 households.

	<p>At the village's rudimentary primary school, teacher Maryan Ahmed has seen the size of her grade four and five class shrink to eight pupils, from 33 in August last year. Boys were prioritized for schooling and girls as young as nine were increasingly being married off for dowry payments or to ease economic pressure on their desperate families, she said.</p> <p>The drought has also taken its toll on wildlife and the environment, with vast tracts of savanna having been reduced to red, sandy scrubland. Emaciated giraffes have begun making their way to Garissa, a tranquil town of 165,000 people, in search of something to drink. Some locals provide them with buckets of river water while others chase them off their property.</p> <p>Mumina Mohammed, the mother in Nunow, is sinking ever deeper in despair and is concerned that if help does eventually come, it will be too little, too late.</p> <p>"I fear we'll have no more rain until October," she said. "Only God knows when I'll have my family back together."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/02 Gun suicide deaths among youth soars
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/gun-suicide-soars-death-youth-report/story?id=85006254
GIST	<p>The rate of young people taking their own lives with firearms in the U.S. has increased faster than for any other age group, and the youth suicide rate is at its highest point in more than 20 years, according to a new gun violence prevention report by Everytown For Gun Safety and first obtained by ABC News.</p> <p>While firearm suicide overall increased about 2% during the pandemic, the rate among young people increased 15% and nearly half of all suicide attempts by young people involve a gun, researchers with Everytown For Gun Safety found. Experts have not pinned down exactly what is causing more young people to turn to suicide with guns, the report notes. But increased anxiety and depression, likely exacerbated by the pandemic, along with the impacts of social media and cyberbullying are among the theorized drivers.</p> <p>"The research shows pretty clearly that people who struggle with mental illness are much more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violent crimes," Everytown research director Sarah Burd-Sharps told ABC News. "That said, certainly knowing the warning signs and learning to talk about mental health -- particularly, we're talking about young people -- so the way we talk about mental health with young people in our lives is a huge part of the solution."</p> <p>"One of the most effective things we can do to help young people in crisis is to keep it out of their hands," Burd-Sharps said.</p> <p>The report's authors point to "red flag" laws as a plausible solution that allow for temporary restrictions on firearm ownership when a person is determined to pose an extreme risk to themselves or others. So far, 19 states have passed such laws that allow local authorities and family members to petition in civil court for the restriction of a person's firearm access, according to Everytown.</p> <p>"Research shows they save lives," Burd-Sharps said. "They very much prevent youth suicide, so it's it's one of the most important policies that can reduce this, tragic spike in youth gun suicide."</p> <p>Safe storage measures for parents who own guns as well as waiting periods for gun purchases are among tools that can help create a safety buffer when someone is in the throes of a mental health episode, Burd-Sharps added.</p> <p>The firearm-related increases documented in the new report track with overall increases in teen and young adult suicide in recent years. Between 2007 and 2018 the suicide rate among those age 10 to 24 increased nearly 60%, according to the CDC.</p>

	<p>The split-second between pulling the trigger of a firearm and the projectile's impact makes suicide attempts with guns much more lethal too. Overall, acts of suicide are fatal in 8.5% of cases while acts of suicide involving a firearm are fatal 90% of the time, according to a 2019 study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine.</p> <p>Suicides have long been a driver of firearm-related deaths. More than half of all gun deaths in 2020 were suicides, according to a 2022 Pew Research Center report.</p> <p>Boys and young men are disproportionately afflicted by firearm suicide and are seven times more likely to kill themselves with a gun compared to their female peers, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Racial and ethnic minority groups in the U.S. are among those hit hardest by the increased suicide rate, Burd-Sharps said. A lack of access to mental health care resulting in higher rates of untreated depression as well as traumatic exposure to discrimination and racism are among the driving factors.</p> <p>Suicide is the third leading cause of death among children and young people ages 10 to 24, according to the CDC.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/02 French diplomatic corps on day-long strike
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/frank-exchange-views-french-diplomats-rare-strike-85126986
GIST	<p>PARIS -- Members of the French diplomatic corps are dropping their traditional reserve to go on a rare strike Thursday, angered by a planned reform they worry will hurt their careers and France's standing in the world.</p> <p>Some ambassadors and numerous diplomats, in posts ranging from Tokyo to the Middle East and Washington, have said they would honor the day-long strike. They want President Emmanuel Macron to scrap a plan to merge career diplomats with a larger body of civil servants, starting in January.</p> <p>The action, announced by Macron in an April decree, will reportedly affect about 800 diplomats. Opponents claim that's just the beginning.</p> <p>"We risk the disappearance of our professional diplomacy," a group of 500 diplomats, wrote in a commentary published last week in Le Monde newspaper. "Today, (diplomatic) agents ... are convinced it is the very existence of the ministry that is now being put into question."</p> <p>Union leaders said Thursday's job action is only the second strike by French diplomats in 20 years. A protest is planned near the imposing French foreign ministry complex known as the Quai d'Orsay, on the River Seine.</p> <p>The government reform is meant to modernize and diversify France's diplomatic corps, which was created in the 16th century, and to bring down the walls of what some in the government see as an elite institution turned in on itself.</p> <p>It will put diplomats into a large pool from all branches of public service, encouraging switches to other ministries and forcing personnel to compete with outsiders for prized diplomatic posts.</p> <p>Diplomats contend their job requires specialization and expertise acquired over years in posts around the world — and has no room for amateurs.</p> <p>The planned change comes amid the war in Ukraine and complex negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, and while France holds the European Union's rotating presidency. Newly-appointed Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna has not commented.</p>

	<p>Dominique de Villepin, a former prime minister and foreign minister known for an eloquent 2003 speech at the United Nations in which he declared French opposition to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, labeled the pending reform in a tweet last month “A historic fault.”</p> <p>For France, the loss of diplomats’ separate status in the civil service means “a loss of independence, a loss of competence, a loss of memory that will weigh heavily on the years ahead,” Villepin tweeted.</p> <p>Even before Macron’s decree, anger and frustration had festered in the foreign ministry’s halls over cuts in funding, personnel and outsourcing. The group commentary in Le Monde deplored “decades of marginalization of the ministry’s role within the (French) state” as well as “a vertiginous reduction” in personnel — down by 30% in 10 years, the diplomats claim. Funding, they said, is but 0.7% of the state budget.</p> <p>The Twitter hashtag, #diplo2metier, shows a number of ambassadors and diplomats around the world joining in or supporting Thursday’s strike.</p> <p>“I will be on strike ... to protest the reform of the diplomatic corps and the continued reduction of means for our diplomacy,” French Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher tweeted on her personal account.</p> <p>Romain Rideau, a counselor at the French Embassy in Tokyo, tweeted that he would be among the strikers “because diplomacy is not a gala dinner where all you have to do is put your feet under the table.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 Iraq: Iran gas cuts will cause shortages
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iraq-iran-gas-cuts-due-nonpayment-shortages-85107663
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD -- Iraq's Electricity Ministry said Wednesday the country will face power shortages after crucial energy supplies from Iran were cut over non-payment.</p> <p>In a statement, the ministry said the total electricity supply was drastically reduced after Iran stopped exporting 5 million cubic meters of gas daily to Iraq. The gas imports are crucial for Iraq to meet soaring demands for electricity during the peak summer months especially in the southern provinces.</p> <p>“The Iranian side has demanded payment of the financial obligations for the gas fees from the Iraqi side,” the statement said. Iraq has been unable to make payments totaling about \$1.7 billion because of the failure of political elites to form a government eight months after national elections. The caretaker Cabinet that's in place does not have the authority to make the payments.</p> <p>The Electricity Ministry said it was in contact with Iran to find a solution to addressing the debt and resume power supplies.</p> <p>Iranian energy imports account for more than a third of Iraq's energy needs during the scorching summer months. Because of U.S. sanctions against Iran, Iraq must also qualify for sanctions waivers in order to pay Tehran for its energy exports.</p> <p>In the summer of 2018, Iraq's failing power grid was a key reason behind violent protests in the southern oil-rich province of Basra. The following year, mass anti-government protests broke out across the capital and Iraq's southern provinces over failed public service delivery, including electricity.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 Southern Calif. historic water restrictions
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-06-02/angelenos-begin-the-first-day-of-historic-water-restrictions
GIST	Millions of Angelenos awoke Wednesday to a new, more arid future as unprecedented water restrictions went into effect across Southern California.

For some, the sweeping limitations on outdoor watering felt like déjà vu from the last time the state was in a significant drought, when [lawns turned brown](#) and short showers became the norm. For others, the rules were a frustrating reminder of how little has changed.

“Here we go again,” said Rose Campos, who has lived in El Sereno for 18 years.

On Wednesday, Campos was helping a crew install drought tolerant landscaping in her daughter’s front yard. The house next door, where Campos and her husband live, still displays a large expanse of grass, already yellowing under the hot sun.

The grass used to be “the pride of the block,” she said, but it will soon be transitioned as well.

Campos is now one of more than 4 million residents in the city of L.A. who are subject to the new rules from the Department of Water and Power that [limit outdoor watering to two days a week](#) in a herculean effort to conserve water in a third year of drought.

Earlier this year, California water officials said they could [only allocate 5%](#) of requested supplies from the State Water Project after the driest-ever January, February and March left meager snowpack and reservoirs near record lows.

Despite the deficits, the region’s residents responded by using about [27% more water](#) in March compared to the same month in 2020, the year the current drought began.

“We must do more. Our situation is critical,” said Adel Hagekhalil, general manager of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which provides water to the DWP.

But as the sun rose on Wednesday, some residents were less than enthusiastic about the new restrictions.

“What horticulturist designed these rules?” said Alfred Gonzalez, 73, as he tended to his garden in Eagle Rock. “LADWP doesn’t know anything about drought irrigation, horticulture, soil.”

While Gonzalez said most of his plants are drought tolerant and can probably survive on eight minutes of water twice a week — the new per-station limit for typical residential systems with non-conserving sprinklers — he also thought the rules were short-sighted.

“If they really wanted to make a difference, they’d put a [moratorium on pools](#), they’d put a moratorium on almonds, they’d put a moratorium on grapes and they’d put a moratorium on marijuana,” he said. “Then I’ll listen to what they have to say. Then I’ll listen to their bulls—.”

Others were similarly defiant.

In Beverlywood, the sprinklers at one house on Hillsboro Avenue were running at full blast, sending water streaming down the sidewalks and into the street, even though Wednesdays are now, technically, non-watering days.

According to the DWP’s new rules, houses with odd-numbered addresses can water Mondays and Fridays, while houses with even-numbered addresses can water Thursdays and Sundays. No watering is allowed between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. regardless of the watering days.

“We all know what days we’re supposed to water on,” one neighbor said with a chuckle, shortly after shutting off his own sprinklers.

A similar story played out during the previous drought, when residents in some tonier neighborhoods from Calabasas to Beverly Hills were criticized for flouting the rules.

Officials have said that won't happen this time around, with DWP General Manager Marty Adams telling the L.A. City Council last week that "enforcement will be everywhere, but it will focus on the highest water-using areas."

Some weren't convinced. Mirna Prado, a nanny in nearby Cheviot Hills, said she's heard a lot about the watering restrictions from her husband, who is a gardener for houses in Beverly Hills and Bel Air.

While some clients are OK with the watering restrictions, others have told him to disregard them, she said, adding that since it's his job, he has to follow what his clients tell him to do.

"Some say they are paying so much for landscaping so they don't want to [follow the restrictions]," Prado said. "They prefer to pay the fine."

Yet even against the backdrop of the Westside's picturesque lawns and flowering gardens, some residents Wednesday said they were aware of the restrictions and took no issue with them.

"I'm prepared to lose plants," said Betty Ann Marshall, who removed her Cheviot Hills lawn a decade ago and switched to a drip irrigation system soon after.

Her neighbor, Kevin Goff, also killed his lawn three or four years ago, but said he wasn't aware of the new twice-a-week watering restriction. He didn't think he could cut his water usage by much more since he's already been conserving, he said.

"I've been in my house for 30 years and I love my garden," he said. "I've already been practicing proper handling of my water, unlike some people."

Some Angelenos, however, were still finding new ways to save.

In Koreatown, Melvin Mouton said he replaced his lawn with bark chips years ago, but still knows which days he can water at his odd-numbered house.

"I'm very very conscious," Mouton said. "I have stopped washing down the sidewalk and driveway."

Back in Eagle Rock, longtime resident Dick Mullott said he has similarly accepted that drought — and its associated water restrictions — are a part of life in California. In preparation for the new rules, he gave away dozens of roses from his front garden over the last several weeks.

"They need too much water," said Mullott, 83.

In addition to roses, Mullott's front yard is home to tomato plants, sunflowers, grasses and a bushy purple Duranta tree, though he said much of that could soon change. He has already transitioned his backyard to drought-tolerant landscaping and plans to make the front yard more hardy as well.

He also emphasized the importance of conservation inside the house, and said he insists on short showers even for out-of-town guests.

But while Mullott was ready for the new restrictions, he said he was also concerned that DWP's message wasn't getting across: He got his first official notice about the change from the agency only yesterday, and he's still unclear about some of the rules.

On top of that, the bimonthly billing cycle means "we only find out every two months how much water we actually use," he added.

Cheviot Hills resident Linda Adatto, 53, was also trying to parse the finer points of the plan.

	<p>Adatto said the new rules should be “enough to keep most landscaping alive,” but was concerned about her recently planted Italian stone pine.</p> <p>During the previous drought, an estimated 14,000 trees died in L.A. city parks alone due to drought restrictions, and Adatto didn’t want the stone pine to become a casualty of the new restrictions.</p> <p>Officials this time have emphasized that they don’t want trees to die, and there is an exception for hand watering, which can be done on any day of the week between 4 p.m. and 9 a.m. using hoses with self-closing shut-off nozzles.</p> <p>Adatto paused as she moved to water the stone pine with a hose.</p> <p>“Is it 8 a.m. or 9 a.m.?” She double-checked. “I don’t want to break the rules.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Calif. new Covid surge still disruptive
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-06-01/second-omicron-wave-shows-covid-19-is-still-highly-disruptive
GIST	<p>A new surge of coronavirus cases is taking shape, as California slogs into a third pandemic summer with far fewer hospitalizations and deaths but still significant disruptions.</p> <p>There are fewer cases of serious illness than occurred during other waves, underscoring the protection imparted by vaccinations, therapeutic drugs and, for some, partial natural immunity stemming from a previous infection.</p> <p>Still, officials are deciding how best to respond now that cases are rapidly rising after plunging in the spring.</p> <p>The extent of infection has prompted some schools, including UCLA, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and Berkeley’s K-12 public schools, to reinstitute indoor mask mandates and has reignited concerns that hospitals may soon be asked to care for larger numbers of coronavirus-positive patients.</p> <p>“If we continue on the current trajectory, we could find that cases and hospitalizations end up exerting stress on our healthcare system within just a few weeks,” Los Angeles County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer said during a recent briefing.</p> <p>Some observers say there’s no sign that California is nearing a peak, as the latest variant’s exceptional contagiousness is thought to be approaching that of measles. State modeling suggests that the spread of COVID-19 is likely still increasing in Southern California, the San Joaquin Valley and Greater Sacramento.</p> <p>Even if hospitals don’t become burdened, there’s concern that climbing rates of transmission could keep people at home for a week or more, ruining plans for graduations, weddings and vacations and making it difficult for businesses to maintain adequate staffing.</p> <p>There’s also worry that unlike in previous waves, people tired of the pandemic will be less willing to wear masks or take other measures to reduce coronavirus spread, potentially threatening the health of vulnerable people at higher risk of severe complications and increasing the chance of people suffering from long COVID.</p> <p>In the San Francisco Bay Area, some businesses and institutions are taking care to avoid greater spread, including the Golden State Warriors, whose coach, Steve Kerr, was briefly out with a coronavirus infection as the team marched through the NBA playoffs, and Apple, which reportedly postponed a three-day-a-week return-to-work plan.</p>

Statewide, officials are reporting nearly 15,000 new coronavirus cases a day, a rate nearly as high as during last summer's Delta surge. The latest wave was spawned by the highly infectious Omicron strains.

San Francisco has one of the state's highest coronavirus case rates, reporting nearly 400 a week for every 100,000 residents as of Monday. Los Angeles County was reporting 310 cases a week for every 100,000 residents as of Wednesday. A rate of 100 or more is considered high.

"It's now a big-time surge," Dr. Robert Wachter, chair of UC San Francisco's Department of Medicine, tweeted Monday. "No longer just cases ... also major uptick in hospitalizations. ... If you're trying to stay well, time to up your game."

While the daily census of coronavirus-positive patients in hospitals has risen lately, it has done so at a much slower pace than in previous surges. On the whole, the patient count remains far lower than in the past.

Statewide, 2,281 coronavirus-positive patients were hospitalized as of Tuesday — up 41% from two weeks ago. By comparison, daily hospitalizations surpassed 8,300 during the height of the Delta wave and topped 15,400 at the peak of the first Omicron surge.

Additionally, some hospital officials in recent weeks have noted that most of the coronavirus-positive patients are not being treated for COVID-19; they may have been admitted for other reasons and tested positive while in the hospital.

"We are not seeing COVID pneumonia. We're seeing flu-like illnesses," tweeted Dr. Brad Spellburg, chief medical officer of L.A. County-USC Medical Center, noting that patients are going home after being seen in the emergency room.

Of about 10 coronavirus-positive patients at his public hospital, only one was admitted primarily for COVID-19, Spellburg said.

However, Ferrer noted that coronavirus-positive patients take up hospital resources, in part to keep them isolated.

"The more cases you have — even if it's just a small fraction of people who get infected and need to be hospitalized — the greater the strain will be on the healthcare system," she said.

In L.A. County, there were 502 coronavirus-positive patients in public and private hospitals as of Tuesday. That's up 38% from two weeks before. In San Francisco, there were 96 patients, up 26% over the same period.

"The rate of increase in hospital admissions are of concern," said Ferrer, who characterized the increase in L.A. County as occurring at a "modest pace."

Computer models posted to the state's COVID-19 forecasting website indicate increasing hospitalizations in the weeks to come — with coronavirus-positive intensive-care patients projected to almost quadruple from 242 to close to 950 by the beginning of July. That's not as high as the winter Omicron peak of about 2,600 but would represent a significant increase from the post-winter low of 112.

State modeling also projects that the overall daily number of hospitalized coronavirus-positive patients could approach 5,000 by the end of June.

Nationwide, COVID-19 deaths started to increase in the days leading up to Memorial Day weekend. The U.S. was reporting an average of 317 COVID-19 deaths a day for the seven day period that ended Friday, up 10% from the previous week. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is now forecasting that daily COVID-19 deaths will likely increase through at least late June, possibly reaching more than 770 a day.

California is averaging 33 COVID-19 deaths a day, a level that has remained stable.

Some medical experts have recently pushed back against what they consider an overly optimistic sentiment that increases in coronavirus cases don't really matter, because immunization rates have lowered the risk of hospitalization and death.

"There is no way to get around the reality that surges of COVID-19 are problematic — they result in people being sick enough to be out of work; others sick enough to be in the hospital; others sick enough to have longer term issues," tweeted Dr. Abraar Karan, an infectious-disease expert at Stanford University. "Normalizing surges is bad public health."

A coronavirus infection brings with it the risk of developing long COVID, in which symptoms like fatigue, difficulty breathing and brain fog can persist for years.

A report published last week in the journal Nature Medicine analyzed health records of veterans and found that vaccinated people who were infected with the coronavirus have some risk of experiencing long COVID. The study reviewed records prior to Dec. 1, before the Omicron wave accelerated in the U.S.

"The findings suggest that vaccination before infection confers only partial protection in the post-acute phase of the disease," the study said. Reliance on vaccines alone and not using other strategies to reduce risk "may not optimally reduce long-term health consequences" from a coronavirus infection, the report said.

A separate report, published last week by the CDC, said roughly 1 in 5 adults who survived COVID-19 have a health condition that might be related to their infection, such as problems affecting the heart or lungs.

It's "wishful thinking" to imagine that recurrent COVID-19 illnesses "aren't a big deal," Wachter tweeted. The truth, he said, is that risks of getting long COVID from "recurrent cases of COVID aren't yet clear."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Avian flu wild birds Seattle, Bellevue parks
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/avian-flu-found-in-wild-birds-at-seattle-bellevue-parks/
GIST	<p>Several wild ducks and geese have tested positive for avian flu, according to Public Health – Seattle & King County.</p> <p>Ducks with bird flu were found on May 22 at Seattle's Green Lake and Volunteer parks and the Bellevue Downtown Park, according to the department. Infected ducks have also been found on private property.</p> <p>If you happened to touch or come within 6 feet of ducks at these parks, Public Health – Seattle & King County asks you to call 206-296-4774.</p> <p>While the risk of avian flu spreading from birds to people is low, the department asks people to notify it and your health care provider if you develop flulike symptoms 10 days after exposure.</p> <p>The first case in Washington was detected in a backyard poultry flock in Pacific County on May 6. Since then, the highly pathogenic disease has been detected in backyard flocks in several counties, including Snohomish, according to the Washington State Department of Agriculture.</p> <p>Two backyard flocks in King County tested positive for avian flu on May 25.</p> <p>The disease is often fatal among birds and is primarily spread through wild migratory birds and their feces.</p>

	<p>The state Department of Agriculture recommended that live market poultry sales pause for 30 days until the end of June and several local zoos have moved their birds indoors from public exhibits.</p> <p>Public Health – Seattle & King County recommends people not approach or touch wild birds, especially any that appear ill or dead. Birds with the disease may be lethargic, have discharge at the nose and mouth or have ruffled feathers.</p> <p>Individuals can report sick or dead birds online at bit.ly/sickwildbirds or by calling 360-902-2200, pressing 4, and leaving a voicemail.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Ex-Corinthian students' federal debt erased
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/former-corinthian-students-get-federal-student-debt-erased/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of students who attended the for-profit Corinthian Colleges chain will automatically get their federal student loans canceled, the Biden administration announced Wednesday, a move that aims to bring closure to one of the most notorious cases of fraud in American higher education.</p> <p>Under the new action, anyone who attended the now-defunct chain from its founding in 1995 to its collapse in 2015 will get their federal student debt wiped clean. It will erase \$5.8 billion in debt for more than 560,000 borrowers, the largest single loan discharge in Education Department history, according to the agency.</p> <p>“As of today, every student deceived, defrauded and driven into debt by Corinthian Colleges can rest assured that the Biden-Harris Administration has their back and will discharge their federal student loans,” Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said. “For far too long, Corinthian engaged in the wholesale financial exploitation of students, misleading them into taking on more and more debt to pay for promises they would never keep.”</p> <p>Tens of thousands of former Corinthian students were already eligible for debt cancellation, but they had to file paperwork and navigate an application process that advocates say is confusing and not widely known about. Now, the relief will be made automatic and extended to additional borrowers.</p> <p>Those who have a remaining balance on their Corinthian debt will also get refunds on payments they have already made, Education Department officials said. But the action does not apply to loans that have already been paid off in full.</p> <p>At its peak, Corinthian was one of the nation’s largest for-profit college companies, with more than 100 campuses across the country and more than 110,000 students at its Everest, WyoTech and Heald schools.</p> <p>But the company shut down in 2015 amid widespread findings of fraud. The Obama administration — working with Kamala Harris, who was then California attorney general and later became vice president — found that scores of campuses were falsifying data on the success of their graduates. In some cases, the schools reported that students had found jobs in their fields of study even though they were working at grocery stores or fast food chains.</p> <p>Hundreds of students told investigators they were pressured to enroll with promises of lucrative employment, only to end up with huge sums of debt and few job prospects. Federal officials also found that the company falsely told students their course credits could be transferred to other colleges.</p> <p>The case inspired a federal crackdown on for-profit colleges, and the Obama administration promised to forgive loans for Corinthian students whose programs lied about job placement rates. The administration went on to expand a process known as borrower defense to repayment, which allows any defrauded student to apply for debt cancellation.</p>

But an explosion in applications for debt forgiveness, along with political battles over the process, created a years-long backlog in the process, leaving many former Corinthian students still awaiting relief.

As of December, the Education Department reported it had more than 109,000 pending applications from students alleging fraud by their colleges, including many Corinthian students. Borrowers and their advocates have been urging the government to erase all Corinthian debt, saying evidence of misconduct was so widespread that all the chain's students were the victims of fraud.

The administration announced the action Wednesday as President Joe Biden considers broader student loan forgiveness for millions of Americans. As a candidate, Biden said he supports forgiving \$10,000 in student loans for all borrowers. He later indicated that such action should come through Congress, but the White House has said he is considering whether to pursue it through executive action.

Advocates said the Biden administration's decision brings long-delayed justice.

"This is a tremendous student victory, and it belongs to the tens of thousands of borrowers who were cheated and abused by Corinthian Colleges," said Eileen Connor, director of the Project on Predatory Student Lending, which has represented Corinthian students in lawsuits. "They never stopped fighting — over three administrations — for the justice they deserve under the law."

Libby DeBlasio Webster, senior counsel for the advocacy group Student Defense, said the news gives a "fresh start" to former Corinthian students, but she noted that many defrauded students from other for-profit colleges are still awaiting help.

"We also hope today's news is a sign that other decisions are on the horizon for thousands of similarly situated students who are waiting for this kind of relief," she said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Jury awards Johnny Depp \$10M libel case
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/johnny-depp-amber-heard-trial-jury-deliberations-2a484944ecfa8947f9f59b44c14bae39?traffic_source=Connatix
GIST	<p>FAIRFAX, Va. (AP) — A jury sided Wednesday with Johnny Depp in his libel lawsuit against ex-wife Amber Heard, awarding the "Pirates of the Caribbean" actor more than \$10 million and vindicating his allegations that Heard lied about Depp abusing her before and during their brief marriage.</p> <p>But in a split decision, the jury also found that Heard was defamed by one of Depp's lawyers, who accused her of creating a detailed hoax that included roughing up the couple's apartment to look worse for police. The jury awarded her \$2 million.</p> <p>The verdicts bring an end to a televised trial that Depp had hoped would help restore his reputation, though it turned into a spectacle that offered a window into a vicious marriage.</p> <p>Heard, who was stoic in the courtroom as the verdict was read, said she was heartbroken.</p> <p>"I'm even more disappointed with what this verdict means for other women. It's a setback. It sets back the clock to a time when a woman who spoke up and spoke out could be publicly humiliated. It sets back the idea that violence against women is to be taken seriously," she said in a statement posted on her Twitter account.</p> <p>Depp, who was not in court Wednesday, said "the jury gave me my life back. I am truly humbled."</p> <p>"I hope that my quest to have the truth be told will have helped others, men or women, who have found themselves in my situation, and that those supporting them never give up," he said in a statement posted to Instagram.</p>

Depp sued Heard for libel in Fairfax County Circuit Court over a December 2018 op-ed she wrote in The Washington Post describing herself as “a public figure representing domestic abuse.” His lawyers said he was defamed by the article even though it never mentioned his name.

The jury found in Depp’s favor on all three of his claims relating to specific statements in the 2018 piece.

Throughout the proceedings, fans who were overwhelmingly on Depp’s side lined up overnight for coveted courtroom seats. Spectators who couldn’t get in gathered on the street to cheer Depp and jeer Heard whenever they appeared outside.

A crowd of about 200 people cheered when Depp’s lawyers came out after the verdict. “Johnny for president!” one man yelled repeatedly.

Greg McCandless, 51, a retired private detective from Reston, Virginia, stood outside the courthouse wearing a pirate hat and red head scarf, a nod to Depp’s famous role as Capt. Jack Sparrow in the “Pirates of the Caribbean” series.

“I do believe that there was defamation, and I do believe that it did hurt his career,” McCandless said. “I think the jury heard the evidence, and the verdict was just.”

In evaluating Heard’s counterclaims, jurors considered three statements by a lawyer for Depp who called her allegations a hoax. They found she was defamed by one of them, in which the lawyer claimed that she and friends “spilled a little wine and roughed the place up, got their stories straight,” and called police.

Sydni Porter, 30, drove an hour from her home in Maryland to show support for Heard. She said the verdict was disappointing, but not surprising, and sends a message to women that “as much evidence as you have (of abuse), it’s never going to be enough.”

The jury found Depp should receive \$10 million in compensatory damages and \$5 million in punitive damages, but the judge said state law caps punitive damages at \$350,000, meaning Depp was awarded \$10.35 million.

While the case was ostensibly about libel, most of the testimony focused on whether Heard had been physically and sexually abused, as she claimed. Heard enumerated more than a dozen alleged assaults, including a fight in Australia — where Depp was shooting a “Pirates of the Caribbean” sequel — in which Depp lost the tip of his middle finger and Heard said she was sexually assaulted with a liquor bottle.

Depp said he never hit Heard and that she was the abuser, though Heard’s attorneys highlighted years-old text messages Depp sent apologizing to Heard for his behavior as well as profane texts he sent to a friend in which Depp said he wanted to kill Heard and defile her dead body.

In some ways, the trial was a replay of a lawsuit Depp filed in the United Kingdom against a British tabloid after he was described as a “wife beater.” The judge in that case ruled in the newspaper’s favor after finding that Heard was telling the truth in her descriptions of abuse.

In the Virginia case, Depp had to prove not only that he never assaulted Heard, but that Heard’s article — which focused primarily on public policy related to domestic violence — defamed him. He also had to prove that Heard wrote the article with actual malice.

And to claim damages, he had to prove that her article caused the damage to his reputation as opposed to any number of articles before and after Heard’s piece that detailed the allegations against him.

The case captivated millions through its gavel-to-gavel television coverage, including impassioned followers on social media who dissected everything from the actors’ mannerisms to the possible

symbolism of what they were wearing. Both performers emerge from the trial with reputations in tatters with unclear prospects for their careers.

Eric Rose, a crisis management and communications expert in Los Angeles, called the trial a “classic murder-suicide.”

“From a reputation-management perspective, there can be no winners,” he said. “They’ve bloodied each other up. It becomes more difficult now for studios to hire either actor because you’re potentially alienating a large segment of your audience who may not like the fact that you have retained either Johnny or Amber for a specific project because feelings are so strong now.”

Depp, a three-time best actor Oscar nominee, had until recent years been a bankable star. His turn as Sparrow helped turn the “Pirates of the Caribbean” into a global franchise, but he’s lost that role. He was also replaced in the third “Fantastic Beasts” spin-off film, “The Secrets of Dumbledore.”

Despite testimony at the trial that he could be violent, abusive and out of control, Depp received a standing ovation Tuesday night in London after performing for about 40 minutes with Jeff Beck at the Royal Albert Hall.

Heard’s acting career has been more modest, and her only two upcoming roles are in a small film and the upcoming “Aquaman” sequel due out next year.

Depp’s lawyers fought to keep the case in Virginia, in part because state law provided some legal advantages compared with California, where the two reside. A judge ruled that Virginia was an acceptable forum for the case because The Washington Post’s printing presses and online servers are in the county.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Protesters ‘die-in’ Amazon Pride Month
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/concerned-that-amazon-offers-anti-trans-guides-for-parents-workers-shut-down-the-companys-pride-month-kickoff/
GIST	<p>As Amazon prepared Wednesday to kick off Pride Month at its Seattle headquarters, a group of people holding transgender pride flags dropped to the ground.</p> <p>The individuals — most of whom identified themselves as Amazon employees — were staging a “die-in” to protest Amazon’s decision to offer books on its platform that activists say are transphobic, like “Desist, Detrans & Detox: Getting Your Child Out of the Gender Cult” and “Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters.”</p> <p>The books, activists say, are prominently displayed on Amazon’s website, particularly when users search for LGBTQ+ titles. “Irreversible Damage” is listed as a bestseller on Amazon’s digital bookshelf for LGBTQ+ studies.</p> <p>Amazon says the books do not violate its content policy. “As a company, we believe strongly in diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a bookseller, we’ve chosen to offer a very broad range of viewpoints, including books that conflict with our company values and corporate positions,” a spokesperson said. “We believe that it’s possible to do both — to offer a broad range of viewpoints in our bookstore, and support diversity, equity, and inclusion.”</p> <p>At the cue of a siren, activists lay down in front of the stage off Seventh Avenue, underneath a pride flag hung between two buildings on Amazon’s main Seattle campus, interrupting the beginning of a speech from the leaders of Glamazon, Amazon’s affinity group for members of the LGBTQ+ community. Amazon did not continue its planned event following the “die-in.”</p> <p>The protest was a continuation of a year-old battle between Amazon employees and executives. In April 2021, dozens of workers backed an internal complaint arguing “Irreversible Damage” violated the</p>

company's policy against selling books that "frame LGBTQ+ identity as a mental illness," according to images of the complaint and responses viewed by The Seattle Times.

Amazon said at the time that it would not stop selling the title. About 500 workers have now signed on to a petition started in April calling on the company again to stop selling "Irreversible Damage" and other titles the activists consider transphobic.

The petition also asks Amazon to establish a workers oversight board to reject and reclassify content while communicating "openly about decisions and justifications." The board would include, and advocate for, workers from marginalized communities.

"By continuing to sell and promote anti-trans books and repeating the rhetoric of the anti-trans hate movement, Amazon upper management has allowed the store that we build and operate to be complicit in this hate movement," the petition reads.

"Amazon's continued lack of action on hate leaves the door open to platforming even more hate and further abuse," it continues. "In response, we are organizing a worker-led movement to stop hate at Amazon."

The organizers of the "die-in" and the petition say they don't want to ban the books entirely but rather want Amazon, as a public company, to take a stand against what they consider hate speech.

"We believe in free speech. We believe in a free marketplace of ideas," one speaker told their "fellow Amazon workers" at the protest. "We know that some content we will find disagreeable, but we draw a line against hate speech.

"We draw a line at content that aids and encourages the psychological abuse of transgender children," continued the speaker, who, like other protesters identifying themselves as Amazon employees, asked that their name not be published to protect their job.

In February 2021, Amazon received a letter from U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and other Republican lawmakers accusing the company of censoring books after it removed a controversial title "When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment" by conservative author Ryan Anderson. Amazon, the senators wrote, "has unabashedly wielded its outsized market share to silence an important voice."

Since then, Amazon's policies haven't changed, but its enforcement has, one of the event's organizers said before Wednesday's protest.

The organizer, who said she has spent roughly 10 years working in Amazon's worldwide consumer division, transitioned during her tenure at the company and said she has felt supported by her team and organization. But Amazon's dismissal of calls to remove the books has had a "painful" impact that has left her questioning how long she can stay.

Already, many of the employees who led the initial call to action have left the company, she said.

"It came to a point several months ago where a lot of us were like, 'We have to do something ... or we have to quit and get out of here,' " she said. "But the reason I stay right now, and the reason many of us are staying, is because we feel as though this struggle is worth it."

The protest marked the first official event for No Hate At Amazon, a new worker-led group that is calling on Amazon leadership to "reject hate." The group did not disclose how many members it had and specified that it was separate from the company affinity group Glamazon.

Earlier this year, Seattle Pride removed Amazon as a sponsor, citing financial support for lawmakers, organizations and legislation that do not support the LGBTQ+ community. Krystal Marx, Seattle Pride

	<p>executive director, said at the time it felt as if Amazon was trying to buy the event with a \$100,000 donation offer and a request to call the annual celebration Seattle Pride Parade Presented by Amazon.</p> <p>Amazon said at the time it “has long supported Seattle Pride because we believe that the rights of LGBTQ+ people must be protected.”</p> <p>Outside Amazon’s headquarters Wednesday, the group wrapped their pink, blue and white flags tightly around themselves and marched from Amazon’s Doppler building to Denny Park, chanting: “When trans rights are under attack, what do we do? Stand up, fight back.”</p> <p>Amazon, the organizer said, has blood on its hands for harm caused to transgender youth. As employees, she said, “we help maintain the infrastructure in one way or another that keeps this machine rolling, that keeps producing this hate content.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	05/31 Canada tests decriminalizing drugs in B.C.
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Canada-to-temporarily-decriminalize-certain-drugs-17210058.php
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Canada’s government said Tuesday it will allow British Columbia to try a three-year experiment in decriminalizing possession of small amounts of drugs, seeking to stem a record number of overdose deaths by easing fear of arrest by users in need of help.</p> <p>The policy approved by federal officials doesn’t legalize the substances, but Canadians in the Pacific coast province who possess up to 2.5 grams of illicit drugs for personal use will not be arrested or charged.</p> <p>The three-year exemption taking effect Jan. 31 will apply to drug users 18 and over and include opioids, cocaine, methamphetamine and MDMA, also known as ecstasy.</p> <p>“Stigma and fear of criminalization cause some people to hide their drug use, use alone, or use in other ways that increase the risk of harm. This is why the Government of Canada treats substance use as a health issue, not a criminal one,” tweeted Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada’s chief public health officer.</p> <p>The province’s health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, said that “we are taking an important step forward to removing that fear and shame and stigma.”</p> <p>“This is not one single thing that will reverse this crisis but it will make a difference,” she added.</p> <p>Dana Larsen, a drug policy reform activist, called the announcement “a step in the right direction,” but said he would prefer to see development of a safe drug supply.</p> <p>“It’s not going to stop anybody dying of an overdose or drug poisoning,” Larsen said. “The drugs are still going to be contaminated.”</p> <p>“I think we need stores where you can go in and find legal heroin, legal cocaine and legal ecstasy and things like that for adults,” he said. “The real solution to this problem is to treat it like alcohol and tobacco.”</p> <p>Alissa Greer, an assistant professor at Simon Fraser University who has a doctorate in public health, said a regulated decriminalization of drugs could help lessen overdose deaths.</p> <p>She said it would be good for users to be able to obtain drugs from “a regulated supply through various models, whether that’s a prescription model, a pharmacy model, more of a compassion club model ... rather than going down to 7-Eleven and buying heroin.”</p> <p>British Columbia is the first Canadian province to apply for an exemption from Canada’s drug laws.</p>

In 2001, Portugal became the first country in the world to decriminalize the consumption of all drugs. People caught with less than a 10-day supply of any drug are usually sent to a local commission, consisting of a doctor, lawyer and social worker, where they learn about treatment and available medical services.

In 2020, Oregon voted to become the first U.S. state to decriminalize hard drugs. Under the change, possession of controlled substances is a newly created Class E “violation,” instead of a felony or misdemeanor. It carries a maximum \$100 fine, which can be waived if the person calls a hotline for a health assessment. The call can lead to addiction counseling and other services.

Carolyn Bennett, federal minister of mental health and addictions, said the experiment in British Columbia could serve as a template for other jurisdictions in Canada.

“This time-limited exemption is the first of its kind in Canada,” she said. “Real-time adjustments will be made upon receiving analysis of any data that indicates a need to change.”

Since 2016, there have been over 9,400 deaths due to toxic illicit drugs in British Columbia, with a one-year record of 2,224 in 2021.

Vancouver Mayor Kennedy Stewart said he gets emails every Monday on drug deaths, including nine last week and 12 the week before. He said one week it was his own family member.

“I felt like crying, and I still feel like crying. This is a big, big thing,” Stewart said.

The 2.5-gram limit set by federal officials for the experiment falls short of the 4.5 grams requested by British Columbia. The higher amount already had been called too low a threshold by some drug-user groups that have said the province didn’t adequately consult them.

Sheila Malcolmson, British Columbia’s minister of mental health, said fear of being criminalized has led many people to hide their addiction and use drugs alone.

“Using alone can mean dying alone, particularly in this climate of tragically increased illicit drug toxicity,” Malcolmson said.

She said the coroner in British Columbia reports that between five and seven people die a day in the province from overdoses and that half of those happen in a private home, often when people are alone.

“Fear and shame keeps drug use a secret,” she said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Olympia students protest gun violence
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article262024792.html
GIST	<p>More than 500 Olympia high school and middle school students walked out Wednesday morning to protest gun violence after 19 elementary-age children and two teachers were shot and killed last week in Uvalde, Texas.</p> <p>Some of those students then marched to the Washington state Capitol, while others stayed on campus at Olympia High School, according to Susan Gifford, communications and community relations director for the Olympia School District. The walkout was organized by members of the Olympia High School Feminism Club.</p> <p>Alayna Winstead-Coby, president of the Feminism Club, told McClatchy that the group began planning the event last Wednesday, the day after the mass shooting took place. She said the group felt “pure outrage” after the shooting, and they wanted to show the school that students were brave enough to skip school over the issue.</p>

“These sort of walkouts are the only type of thing that makes voices heard,” she said.

Washington State Patrol estimated that about 100 students gathered for a rally on the north steps of the Legislative Building, although many students were coming and going, making it difficult for WSP to get a reliable count, they told McClatchy.

Students from mostly Washington Middle School and OHS attended the event, although some students were there from other schools, including North Thurston High School and other middle schools, according to Winstead-Coby. Hannah Martin, a member of the Feminism Club, read an open letter to officials.

“If there’s a shooter, hide in the corner, jump out those windows, don’t be the hero, save yourself,” she read. “Because if we won’t, who will? You surely won’t.

“Instead, you stand outside an elementary school for an hour because it’s not safe, but still, you expect us to feel safe when you, a trained professional, refused to go in yourself,” she continued.

Organizers then read the names of the 19 students and two teachers who perished in the Uvalde mass shooting before taking a moment of silence.

Middle schoolers left Washington Middle School at 10:43 a.m. to meet high schoolers at OHS, who were scheduled to leave at 11 a.m.

Some students drove but most walked to the state Capitol while carrying signs and chanting. OHS is about 2.2 miles away from the Capitol, while WMS is about 2.6 miles, according to Google maps.

The OHS attendance office told McClatchy that many parents called in the morning to excuse their student’s absences. Some students who walked to the Capitol returned to class after the rally.

Last month, the same organizers staged a walkout in protest of the preliminary ruling that was leaked overturning Roe v. Wade abortion decision. Hundreds of students also attended that rally at Heritage Park after leaving their respective schools.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Seattle, Tacoma officials: violent summer
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/seattle-police-chief-concerned-about-summer-gun-violence-based-on-memorial-day-statistics
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The Seattle interim police chief and the mayor of Tacoma expressed concerns that their respective cities could see a violent summer as shootings and homicides continue to trend upward.</p> <p>Interim SPD chief Adrian Diaz said his concerns stem from the Memorial Day weekend-- a time that the city typically examines when looking ahead to the summer.</p> <p>"We gauge our summer based on the Memorial Day weekend and there were a lot of shots fired," said Diaz. "We've already had over 100 more shots fired this year than compared to last year, and last year was our all-time high."</p> <p>Over that Memorial Day weekend, Seattle had two shootings with injuries and eight other reports of shots fired.</p> <p>Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards shared a bleak statistic for her city as well.</p> <p>"We are at 23 homicides this year," said Woodards. "There have been years when we didn't have 23 homicides in a whole year. We need common-sense gun laws."</p>

The recent tragedies in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Uvalde, Texas, and Buffalo, New York, along with the spike in local shootings, have put mayors, police chiefs and any decision-makers responsible for public safety under the spotlight to affect change.

Diaz is looking at local statistics to see what the root of the problem is and how to solve it.

"We are trying to understand each and every one of those cases to determine the nexus of what is it related to," Diaz said of the weekend's shootings. "We are trying to find out if it was a robbery nexus or whether it was related to youth activity or homelessness."

While Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell's administration said there has been a report of shots fired about one every two days in city encampments, only one of the 10 Memorial Day weekend shootings were reported to be at an encampment. A victim was never located.

"I don't think we need another shooting for us once again to talk about policies that need to change," Harrell said on Tuesday.

His comment references a longer-term change rather than a short term. Harrell said he would like state lawmakers to give cities some ability to control guns. Currently, all gun legislation is a product of the Washington State Legislature and the US Congress.

"One of the things I want to accomplish during my first term is relief from that state exemption where I can't do something as simple as barring-- prohibiting-- guns on open spaces like a park. I'm prohibited from doing that. I'm prohibited from taking the firearm away from someone who is intoxicated. I think the cities should be able to do that-- we can take away someone's driver's license if they're intoxicated," Harrell explained at the end of a press conference on Tuesday that focused on the homelessness crisis.

Harrell was asked about gun violence after the press conference wrapped up.

Woodards also weighed in on her plan to combat the rising violence in her city.

"We are adding additional patrols, we are going to hot spot areas already, so we are not waiting for that crime plan to be completed," Woodards said.

Woodards says Tacoma Police have 50 officer positions that are open, but at the current departure rate, the city may not put a dent into that number. On the other hand, Seattle has lost more than 400 officers since the beginning of 2020.

Diaz, Harrell and Woodards are having to make public safety decisions with fewer officers they want, along with a public that is demanding the ability to walk down any street safely.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Sound Transit light rail service disruptions
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/link-light-rail-maintenance-construction-to-start-next-month-riders-should-prepare-for-service-disruptions
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Link riders will experience service disruptions starting next month as Sound Transit crews begin maintenance and construction for expanding light rail operations.</p> <p>Transportation officials said the "Future Ready" project will prepare for the addition of 33 miles of the light rail system within the next three years.</p> <p>The work will require riders to plan ahead for longer travel times and be prepared for "intermittent periods of travel impacts" from July through early 2023.</p>

"We need to ensure that our system is ready for the major expansions ahead," said Sound Transit Interim CEO Brooke Belman. "These projects will impact far fewer riders now than if we delayed them until after further expansions open. While the disruptions that this work will cause are unavoidable, we will work hard to minimize the impact on service to our riders. The end result will be a safe and improved system ready for our next phase of growth."

Sound Transit listed the important dates and details of work being done for the first two phases:

July 11 to July 24 and Aug. 22 to Sept. 4

In order to replace tile at the Columbia City Station, train frequencies will be reduced to 20 minutes in each direction during all operating hours during the closure of one track, requiring all trains to use a single track between Mount Baker and Tukwila.

Oct. 21 to Sunday, Oct. 23 and Nov. 11 to Sunday, Nov. 13

As a result of work on the overhead catenary system in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT), train frequencies will be reduced to 20 minutes in each direction until 11 p.m. From 11 p.m. until end of revenue service, a Link bus shuttle will be available to connect passengers between Capitol Hill Station and SODO Station.

A period of five days in late Q3 2022

In order to repair and replace the overhead catenary system, Link will be shut down between Rainier Beach and Tukwila International Blvd. stations with a Link bus shuttle connecting passengers between these two stations.

A period of at least three weeks in Q4 2022

Trains will be single tracked through the DSTT and train frequencies will be reduced to 20 minutes.

Q1 2023

This work is needed to complete connections between the current 1-Line service and new 2-Line tracks that will link riders to the Eastside. Impacts are still to be determined.

Riders who want to stay informed about upcoming service changes, can sign up for Sound Transit's [rider alerts](#).

As the Future Ready project is underway, Sound Transit said it will continue work on replacing all escalators and elevators in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Seattle voids, refunds 7mo. parking tickets
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/7-months-of-seattle-parking-tickets-will-be-canceled-refunded-to-due-lapse-of-authority
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The city of Seattle said that seven months-worth of parking tickets will either be canceled or refunded due to lapsed authority by the city to issue those tickets.</p> <p>The city will be mailing notifications to those who received eligible non-moving parking tickets from Sept. 1, 2021 through April 5, 2022.</p> <p>The mail notifications will state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you received a parking ticket from September 1, 2021 through April 5, 2022, you do not have to pay your ticket; these tickets have been canceled. No further action is needed.• If you paid a parking ticket issued from September 1, 2021 through April 5, 2022, the City will refund the amount paid, automatically. If the original payment was made using a credit card using the Municipal Court's website or automated telephone system, the refund will be charged back to the corresponding credit card. For all other payments, a check will be issued and mailed

	<p>to the best address on record. You should expect to receive a refund within 60 days of the public announcement.</p> <p>Traffic tickets are not included in this refund. You can see if your tickets are eligible here.</p> <p>According to The Seattle Times, during this period, parking officers had not been granted the authority to write citations.</p> <p>This refund will cost the city of Seattle nearly \$5 million, according to The Seattle Times. More than 200,000 parking tickets will be eligible for voiding or refunds.</p> <p>The lapse in authority comes from a switch made in September of 2021, where parking enforcement was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Seattle Police Department to the Seattle Department of Transportation.</p> <p>Since that transition, the officers under SDOT were not granted "special commission" status needed to issue those tickets.</p>
Return to Top	

Cyber Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 FBI warns about Russia destructive attacks
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/fbi-director-warns-that-russia-might-resort-to-destructive-cyberattacks/
GIST	<p>The director of the FBI on Wednesday said the intelligence agency is “laser focused” on thwarting Russian cyber operations, warning that the country has taken steps to launch potential destructive attacks.</p> <p>In a far-reaching keynote address delivered at Boston College’s Conference on Cyber Security, FBI Director Christopher Wray spoke about immediate threats tied to Russia’s war on Ukraine, saying that the country’s “recklessness with human lives carries over to how they act in cyberspace.”</p> <p>The threat of wiper malware and other damaging attacks has prompted the FBI to launch operations earlier in the process than they might have in the past — such as when they observe Kremlin-linked hackers scanning organizations, instead of when they attempt to deploy malware or steal information. “Russia has... gained access to thousands of companies, including critical infrastructure,” Wray said. “They could use the same access to do something potentially destructive.”</p> <p>In recent months, the FBI has pushed out technical indicators and guidance not just to government agencies, but to private companies and critical infrastructure operators that may be the target of attacks, Wray said. “We’ve seen the Russian government taking specific preparatory steps towards potential destructive attacks, both here and abroad... We’re watching for their cyber activity to become more destructive as the war keeps going poorly.”</p> <p>Wray cited the Department of Justice’s takedown of the Cyclops Blink botnet in March — which was used by Russian’s Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) to control thousands of infected devices — as an example of how the U.S. government is taking an increasingly proactive approach to stopping cyberattacks launched by the Kremlin.</p> <p>“That was a pretty solid hit against Russian intelligence, and it shows there’s quite a bit we can do” to help companies targeted by Russia, Wray said.</p> <p>Wray added that the DoJ has developed a three-pronged approach to imposing costs on hackers: focusing on the people, their infrastructure, and their money. In addition to arresting and extraditing the hackers themselves, the Justice Department in recent years has gone after affiliates, hosting providers, money launderers, and the wide web of people and organizations that make cyberattacks possible.</p>

“We can make the most impact when we disrupt all three together,” he said.

Not the only threat

Although Wray began his speech by sounding the alarm on Russia, he later emphasized cyberthreats from Iran, North Korea, and China — which he said has “a bigger hacking program than all other nations combined.”

“The Chinese government is methodical, hacking in support of long-term economic goals... It operates on a scale that Russia doesn’t come close to,” he said, adding that even “noisy and reckless” hacks launched by Beijing fit into a strategic plan to undermine U.S. economic and national security.

The threat is especially important given the U.S.’s relations with [Taiwan](#), which lawmakers say could be attacked by China the same way that Russia invaded Ukraine.

“We know China is studying the Ukraine conflict intensely,” Wray said.

He also provided new details about an attempted hack targeting the Boston Children’s Hospital last year, saying that it was the work of Iranian government-backed hackers. The attack, which took place in June 2021, was “one of the most despicable cyberattacks I’ve ever seen,” Wray added. The nationally-ranked hospital has more than 400 pediatric beds.

“We cannot let up on China or Iran or criminal syndicates while we’re focusing on Russia,” Wray said. “We’re taking on all those threats.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/02 Elasticsearch databases held for ransom
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/cybercriminals-hold-1200-unsecured-elasticsearch-databases-ransom
GIST	<p>Secureworks warns of a new attack campaign targeting internet-exposed, improperly secured Elasticsearch databases to replace their data with a ransom note.</p> <p>Over 1,200 databases that could be accessed without authentication have already fallen victim to the attackers, which replaced their indexes with a note demanding a payment of 0.012 Bitcoin in exchange for the data.</p> <p>“In each case, data held in the databases was replaced with a ransom note stored in the 'message' field of an index called 'read_me_to_recover_database'. Inside the 'email' field is a contact email address,” Secureworks notes.</p> <p>The researchers identified four email addresses used in these attacks, as well as two different Bitcoin wallets. The ransom requests total roughly \$280,000, but no payment appears to have been made to date, suggesting that the campaign has been unsuccessful.</p> <p>What Secureworks could not determine was the number of potential victims, because the databases were hosted on networks maintained by cloud computing providers.</p> <p>“It is likely that some databases belong to the same organization, but identifying specific victims was not possible in most cases,” the researchers say.</p> <p>This campaign shows the risk that internet-facing databases pose to organizations, especially if they are misconfigured or unsecured. Finding such instances is trivial and attackers can easily take control of them. Elastic has long warned of the risks associated with exposing Elasticsearch databases to the internet, and has provided detailed instructions on how clusters can be properly secured.</p>

According to Secureworks, while an automated script was likely used to access the vulnerable databases and replace indexes with the ransom note, it's unlikely that the threat actor behind the campaign was able to exfiltrate the data from such a large number of databases.

"[T]he cost of storing data from 1,200 databases would be prohibitively expensive. It is therefore likely that the data was not backed up and that paying the ransom would not restore it," the researchers say.

This is not the first campaign targeting improperly secured Elasticsearch databases. In 2017, hackers [hit thousands of Elasticsearch clusters](#), after ransacking [over 33,000 MongoDB databases](#). In 2020, thousands of MongoDB databases once again fell victim to a similar attack.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 DeFi cyberattacks \$1.8B in losses 2021
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/cybercrime/cyberattacks-on-decentralized-finance-leads-to-1-8-billion-in-losses-in-2021
GIST	<p>Despite its focus on "decentralizing" its financial mission, so-called "DeFi" concerns are fast becoming a central focal point for attackers, according to industry experts.</p> <p>As witnessed in previous attacks on decentralized cryptocurrency concerns, cyber thieves are continuing to target decentralized finance (aka DeFi) networks in their quest to capture online and mobile funds outright, as well as the sensitive individual data which could offer access to other legitimate accounts.</p> <p>Indeed, DeFi-focused cyberattacks are believed to have cost enterprises roughly \$1.8 billion in 2021, according to recently released research cited by Bishop Fox.</p> <p>Decentralized finance is most commonly associated with cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, which use a DeFi-type infrastructure through blockchain to establish their offerings. Reviewing a total of 65 cyberattacks, Bishop Fox found that 9 out of 10 losses came "from unsophisticated attacks ... which points to the lax cybersecurity practices of the sector," according to Bishop Fox, a Tempe, Arizona-based computer services company.</p> <p>However, it is not necessarily targeting DeFi-based cryptocurrencies that creates the greatest exposure. With roughly "five [DeFi] attacks per week [in the] last year," just over half of these intrusions (51%) exploited "smart contracts" bugs, according to the service provider's research. This still remains troubling for IT security protectors as "smart contracts are essentially records of transactions, stored on the blockchain," per Bishop Fox research.</p> <p>Decentralized finance systems really came into its own last year, with DeFi based cryptocurrencies nestling into more conservative businesses, and the underlying blockchain technology being embraced for a plethora of activities — and with its rising popularity came the cyberattacks.</p> <p>"Wallets were emptied, smart contracts stripped, and investors left with dreams and regrets," Dylan Dubief, a Bishop Fox senior security consultant, wrote about the report. "To understand the risks of these new blockchain technologies and use cases, we analyzed the main hacks that occurred in 2021."</p> <p>"The world of decentralized finance is extremely vast, and we can't be aware of all the projects and all the hacks that may have taken place," wrote Dubief, adding there have been various "rug pull and exit scams, since both are more a matter of fraud than security weaknesses."</p> <p>DeFi networks last year experienced roughly five intrusions per month, with particularly pointed attacks hitting in May and December, according to Bishop Fox.</p> <p>As with other common cyberattacks, "Once an [exploitation] technique is mastered, attackers go through applications to find and hack all those that are vulnerable before developers can patch their code," according to Bishop Fox.</p>

	<p>“Chain attacks targeting SmartContracts that have been forked multiple times. Often, if the original application is vulnerable, then all the forks are, too.”</p> <p>Four out of five of such DeFi attacks "could have been avoided because they originated from the use of vulnerable code or from a fork of projects containing vulnerabilities.”</p> <p>DeFi intrusions also play to the fact that “users are rarely aware of how SmartContracts work, nor are they able to read their source code,” according to the blog. “Unfortunately, this convenience also provides an additional layer — a front end — that can be vulnerable to attack.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 More healthcare organizations pay ransom
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/healthcare-organizations-pay-ransom/
GIST	<p>Global healthcare organizations (HCOs) experienced a 94% year-on-year surge in ransomware attacks last year, with almost twice as many electing to pay their extorters, according to new data from Sophos.</p> <p>The security vendor commissioned Vanson Bourne to compile its report, The State of Ransomware in Healthcare 2022, from interviews with 381 IT pros in 31 countries.</p> <p>It revealed that two-thirds of HCOs were hit by ransomware last year, up from just a third in 2020. Sophos claimed this surge was down to the popularity of ransomware-as-a-service on the cybercrime underground.</p> <p>However, it could also be a result of the increased willingness of HCOs to pay their attackers. Some 61% paid a ransom in 2021, up from just 34% a year previously.</p> <p>Sophos claimed that the high cost of remediation, and the impact of operational outages, coupled with the increased sophistication of attacks on the sector could explain this jump. Just 2% of respondents paid a ransom and got all their data back.</p> <p>“The increase in successful ransomware attacks is part of an increasingly challenging broader threat environment which has affected healthcare more than any other sector,” the report noted.</p> <p>“Healthcare saw the highest increase in volume of cyber-attacks (69%) as well as the complexity of cyber-attacks (67%) compared to the cross-sector average of 57% and 59% respectively. In terms of the impact of these cyber-attacks, healthcare was the second most affected sector (59%) compared to the global average of 53%.”</p> <p>Perhaps unsurprisingly, HCOs hit by ransomware recorded a major impact to their business: 94% said it impaired their ability to operate and 90% that it caused loss of revenue. On average, it took victim organizations one week to recover.</p> <p>The problem is exacerbated by the fact that many HCOs are finding it more difficult to obtain cyber-insurance. Only 78% are covered versus 83% across all sectors.</p> <p>However, this is forcing improvements in baseline security: 97% of respondents claimed to have made changes to their cyber-defenses as a result of hardening insurance demands.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Feds warn against paying Karakurt ransoms
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-govt-paying-karakurt-extortion-ransoms-won-t-stop-data-leaks/
GIST	Several U.S. federal agencies warned organizations today against paying ransom demands made by the Karakurt gang since that will not prevent their stolen data from being sold to others.

Karakurt, the [data extortion arm](#) of the Conti ransomware gang and cybercrime syndicate, is focused on [stealing data](#) from companies since at least June 2021 and forcing them into paying ransoms under the threat of publishing the information online.

Within just two months, between September and November 2021, more than 40 organizations have fallen victim to Karakurt hacking attempts.

After stealing their victims' data, Karakurt demands ransoms ranging from \$25,000 to \$13 million worth of Bitcoin that must be paid within a week.

The extortion gang is pressing victims into paying the data extortion ransom by harassing their business partners, clients, and employees via email and phone calls prodding them to ask for negotiations to prevent data leaks.

"Although Karakurt's primary extortion leverage is a promise to delete stolen data and keep the incident confidential, some victims reported Karakurt actors did not maintain the confidentiality of victim information after a ransom was paid," the FBI, CISA, U.S. Department of Treasury, and FinCEN said in a [joint advisory](#).

"The U.S. government strongly discourages the payment of any ransom to Karakurt threat actors, or any cyber criminals promising to delete stolen files in exchange for payments."

Also known for exaggerated claims

The federal agencies further revealed that the Conti extortion arm is also known for often exaggerating the amount and value of the data they've stolen from victims' networks.

In some cases, Karakurt has even claimed to have stolen more data than their victims' servers could store. "Karakurt actors have also exaggerated the degree to which a victim had been compromised and the value of data stolen," the agencies added.

"For example, in some instances, Karakurt actors claimed to steal volumes of data far beyond the storage capacity of compromised systems or claimed to steal data that did not belong to the victim."

Today's joint advisory also comes with detailed information on the tactics used by Karakurt operators during all attack stages, indicators of compromise, and mitigation measures to prevent or block their hacking attempts.

The U.S. federal agencies also shared a shortlist of actions that all organizations should take to mitigate ransomware threats, including prioritizing patches for security flaws exploited in the wild, training users to recognize and report phishing attacks, and enforcing multi-factor authentication (MFA).

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/31 DOJ seizes domains selling stolen data
SOURCE	https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/weleakinfo-to-and-related-domain-names-seized?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON – The FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice announced today that they have seized the internet domain name weleakinfo.to and two related domain names, ipstress.in and ovh-booter.com, following an international investigation into websites allowing users to buy access to stolen personal information or to perform attacks on victim networks.</p> <p>The announcement was made by U.S. Attorney Matthew M. Graves of the District of Columbia and Special Agent in Charge Wayne A. Jacobs of the FBI Washington Field Office's Criminal and Cyber Division.</p> <p>"Today, the FBI and the Department stopped two distressingly common threats: websites trafficking in stolen personal information and sites which attack and disrupt legitimate internet businesses," said U.S. Attorney Graves. "Cyber crime often crosses national borders. Using strong working relationships with</p>

our international law enforcement partners, we will address crimes like these that threaten privacy, security, and commerce around the globe.”

“These seizures are prime examples of the ongoing actions the FBI and our international partners are undertaking to disrupt malicious cyber activity,” said Special Agent in Charge Jacobs. “Disrupting malicious DDoS operations and dismantling websites that facilitate the theft and sale of stolen personal information is a priority for the FBI.”

The WeLeakInfo.to website had claimed to provide its users a search engine to review and obtain the personal information illegally obtained in over 10,000 data breaches containing seven billion indexed records – including, for example, names, email addresses, usernames, phone numbers, and passwords for online accounts. The website sold subscriptions so that any user could access the results of these data breaches, with subscriptions providing unlimited searches and access during the subscription period (one day, one week, one month, three months, or lifetime). In January 2020, the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice also [announced](#) that they had seized the internet domain name weleakinfo.com, shutting down a similar service then provided at that site.

The ipstress.in and ovh-booter.com domains were also seized. Those sites publicly offered to conduct “Distributed Denial of Service” attacks, or “DDoS” attacks for clients – specifically, a format called booter or stressor attacks. DDoS attacks are a type of network attack in which multiple internet-enabled devices are used to attack computers hosting a website – usually by flooding the site with internet traffic – for the purpose of rendering it inaccessible to legitimate users or unable to communicate with the internet.

With execution of the warrant, the seized domain names – weleakinfo.to and the related domains – are now in the custody of the federal government, effectively suspending the website’s operation. Visitors to the site will now find a seizure banner that notifies them that the domain name has been seized by federal authorities. The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia issued the seizure warrant.

The seizures of these domains were part of a coordinated law enforcement action with the National Police Corps of the Netherlands and the Federal Police of Belgium. The actions executed by our international partners included the arrest of a main subject, searches of several locations, and seizures of the webserver’s infrastructure.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 First NFT insider trading scheme charges
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/technology-new-york-arrests-manhattan-a9de5a1cebeef9f1588f03dc0262aa57
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — A former product manager at an online marketplace was arrested Wednesday in what federal authorities called the first ever digital asset insider trading scheme involving NFTs.</p> <p>Nathaniel Chastain, a former employee of a company that does business as OpenSea, was arrested in Manhattan. He was later released on \$100,000 bail after entering a not guilty plea to wire fraud and money laundering charges.</p> <p>Chastain, 31, and his lawyers declined comment immediately after the Manhattan federal court hearing.</p> <p>U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said the charges were a first because they pertained to NFTs, or non-fungible tokens, that provide digital ownership of art and other content.</p> <p>Michael J. Driscoll, head of New York’s FBI office, said Chastain used his knowledge of confidential information to buy dozens of NFTs in advance of them being featured on OpenSea’s homepage. OpenSea is the largest online marketplace for the purchase and sale of NFTs, authorities noted.</p> <p>Driscoll said the emergence of any new investment tool such as “blockchain supported non-fungible tokens” will lead some to exploit its vulnerabilities for illegal profits.</p>

	<p>“NFTs might be new, but this type of criminal scheme is not,” Williams said. “Nathaniel Chastain betrayed OpenSea by using its confidential business information to make money for himself. Today’s charges demonstrate the commitment of this Office to stamping out insider trading — whether it occurs on the stock market or the blockchain.”</p> <p>Chastain, as part of his job, was responsible for selecting NFTs to be featured on OpenSea’s homepage, authorities said. They added that price buyers were usually willing to pay more for an NFT once it was featured on OpenSea’s homepage, enabling Chastain to sell them at two- to five-times his initial purchase price.</p> <p>He concealed the fraud by conducting the purchases and sales through anonymous digital currency wallets and anonymous accounts at OpenSea, authorities said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 FBI thwarts cyberattack on Boston hospital
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-technology-health-middle-east-e4f8e7145e4b4447a331d4b0cc5a5bd3
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI thwarted a planned cyberattack on a children’s hospital in Boston that was to have been carried out by hackers sponsored by the Iranian government, FBI Director Christopher Wray said Wednesday.</p> <p>Wray told a Boston College cybersecurity conference that his agents learned of the planned digital attack from an unspecified intelligence partner and got Boston Children’s Hospital the information it needed last summer to block what would have been “one of the most despicable cyberattacks I’ve seen.”</p> <p>“And quick actions by everyone involved, especially at the hospital, protected both the network and the sick kids who depended on it,” Wray said.</p> <p>The FBI chief recounted that anecdote in a broader speech about cyber threats from Russia, China and Iran, and the need for partnerships between the U.S. government and the private sector.</p> <p>He said the bureau and Boston Children’s Hospital had worked closely after a hacktivist attacked the hospital’s computer network in 2014. Martin Gottesfeld launched a cyberattack at the hospital to protest the care of a teenager at the center of a high-profile custody battle; Gottesfeld later was sentenced to 10 years in prison. The attack against the hospital and a treatment home cost the facilities tens of thousands of dollars and disrupted operations for days.</p> <p>“Children’s and our Boston office already knew each other well — before the attack from Iran — and that made a difference,” Wray said.</p> <p>He did not ascribe a particular motive to the planned attack on the hospital, but he noted that Iran and other countries have been hiring cyber mercenaries to conduct attacks on their behalf. In addition, the health care and public health sector is classified by the U.S. government as one of 16 critical infrastructure sectors, and health care providers such as hospitals are seen as ripe targets for hackers.</p> <p>When it comes to Russia, he said, the FBI is “racing” to warn potential targets about preparatory actions that hackers are taking toward destructive attacks. In March, for instance, the FBI warned that it was seeing increased interest by hackers in energy companies since the start of Russia’s war against Ukraine.</p> <p>Hackers from China have stolen more corporate and personal data from people in the United States than all other nations combined, as part of a broader geopolitical goal to “lie, cheat and steal their way into global denomination of global sectors,” Wray said.</p> <p>The speech took place as the FBI continues to combat ransomware attacks from criminal gangs, a continuing concern for U.S. officials despite the absence of crippling intrusions in recent months.</p>

	<p>Wray emphasized the need for private companies to work with the FBI to thwart ransomware gangs and nation-state hackers.</p> <p>“What these partnerships let us do is hit our adversaries at every point — from the victims’ networks, back all the way to the hackers’ own computers,” Wray said.</p> <p>The FBI and other federal agencies have been working to assure hacking victims that it is in their best interest to report intrusions and cyber crimes. Many companies attacked by ransomware gangs often do not go to the FBI for a variety of reasons.</p> <p>Ohio Sen. Rob Portman, the top Republican on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, issued a report this year critical of the FBI’s response to some ransomware victims. In two cases, the FBI “prioritized its investigative and prosecutorial efforts to disrupt attacker operations over victims’ need to protect data and mitigate damage,” the report said.</p> <p>One unnamed Fortune 500 company told committee staff that the FBI did not offer any “helpful assistance” when responding to a ransomware attack.</p> <p>Wray, though, cited the FBI’s capacity to get a technically trained agent to any victimized company in an hour — “and we use it a lot.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	05/31 Website tracks homelessness in Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/mayor-harrell-launches-plan-to-address-track-homelessness-in-seattle/
GIST	<p>Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell shared a new homelessness dashboard on Tuesday that gives a “snapshot” of people experiencing homelessness by neighborhood, and identifies roughly 1,300 new or upcoming shelter and housing units.</p> <p>Harrell and Deputy Mayor of Housing and Homelessness Tiffany Washington shared the new interactive website at a news conference outside the Dockside Apartments, a \$18.9 million affordable housing project in Green Lake.</p> <p>The building, acquired by the Low Income Housing Institute, will provide 70 new permanent housing units for homeless people and an additional 22 for residents earning up to 50% of the area median income, or \$45,300 annually.</p> <p>The dashboard itself, Washington says, is designed to track the city’s unhoused population and connect people with shelter, transitional housing or permanent units like those at Dockside.</p> <p>“When you take the time to build a database of what things are under construction, that then allows you to connect those [projects] pending and under construction with the locations that people are living unsheltered,” Washington said.</p> <p>The mayor’s dashboard tracks new housing and shelter units that are in the preconstruction phase, under construction, or completed and available. Currently, the city shows 241 units in preconstruction, 540 in construction and 553 available.</p> <p>Though the units were primarily planned and funded before Harrell took office, he is the first mayor to connect the units with people experiencing homelessness in this fashion.</p> <p>The dashboard also includes a “reactive” count of tents and RVs in the city, or those that residents have flagged, but is not a “proactive” or complete count, and does not reflect the number of people who may be staying in tents and vehicles. It also does not include other types of structures.</p>

The current partial count shows 763 tents and 225 RVs across the city as of May.

Tents are most common downtown, where the city reports 183; areas around Sodo, where the city reports 129; and the North Beacon Hill area, where the city counts 69 active tents.

Active RVs counted by the city are most dense in Duwamish/Sodo with 45, Georgetown with 33, Fremont with 29 and South Park, also with 29.

According to Harrell, creating the system and identifying the need and the housing stock has to happen in order for new housing to be effective.

“I’m building systems here,” Harrell said at a news conference Tuesday. “It doesn’t matter how many years they were in progress, in fact, I can’t even concern myself with that. Because unless it’s part of a plan, we’re going to be having this conversation 10 years from now.”

The dashboard also contains data on public safety issues at encampments, noting 3,707 emergency calls from unhoused individuals, or about 31 per day, from January-April; 608 fires at tent or RV encampments; and 53 shots fired incidents involving someone who is homeless in the same time frame, which will be considered in scheduling encampment clearings.

“There’s not a neighborhood in Seattle that’s not being impacted by the crisis that we face,” Washington said. “So we are trying to be less reactive.”

While Washington said that the city will respond to everyone who complains about an encampment or shelter, she said that the volume of complaints in an area will not determine the speed at which an encampment is cleared.

“What happened last year is someone with power or someone who has time on their hands would just send all these horrendous emails and pictures of things going really, really bad,” she said, noting that the city provides the King County Regional Homelessness Authority a calendar booked two months in advance so it can schedule outreach at encampments scheduled for clearing.

“And it’s fluid, so sometimes the calendar moves,” Washington said. “If we had something scheduled for June 15 and then tomorrow there’s a huge fire or somebody gets shot, we might move some of [the other scheduled clearings] down the line.”

At the news conference, Harrell also committed to issuing permits for approved affordable housing projects within 12 months of application and releasing a public safety plan in “coming weeks, not months,” to similarly quantify public safety issues and progress in the city.

[Return to Top](#)

The dashboard can be found at homelessness.seattle.gov.

HEADLINE	06/01 Europol takes down FluBot operation
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/flubot-android-malware-operation-shutdown-by-law-enforcement/
GIST	<p>Europol has announced the takedown of the FluBot operation, one of the largest and fastest-growing Android malware operations in existence.</p> <p>The malware operation's takedown resulted from a law enforcement operation involving eleven countries following a complex technical investigation to pinpoint FluBot's most critical infrastructure.</p> <p>The participants in the operation were Australia, Belgium, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United States.</p>

"Known as FluBot, this Android malware has been spreading aggressively through SMS, stealing passwords, online banking details, and other sensitive information from infected smartphones across the world. Its infrastructure was successfully disrupted earlier in May by the Dutch Police (Politie), rendering this strain of malware inactive." - Europol.

As the [Dutch Police announced](#) today, they have disconnected ten thousand victims from the FluBot network and prevented over 6.5 million spam SMS from reaching prospective victims.

In March 2021, the police in Spain arrested four suspects who were then considered key members of the FluBot operation, as the malware had primarily infected users in the region.

The hiatus in its distribution was momentary, though, as the malware rebounded to unprecedented levels targeting multiple other countries beyond Spain.

This time, however, [Europol underlines](#) that the FluBot infrastructure is under the control of law enforcement, so there can be no re-ignite.

At this time, no announcements about any arrests have been made, so we assume that the action was focused on disrupting the malware's infrastructure at this stage.

FluBot's rapid proliferation

FluBot is an Android malware that steals banking and cryptocurrency account credentials by overlaying phishing pages on top of the interface of the legitimate apps when the victims open them.

Additionally, it can access SMS content and monitor notifications, so two-factor authentication and OTP codes can be snatched on the fly.

Its rapid proliferation is thanks to the abuse of the contact list of infected devices to send SMS to all contacts through a person they trust.

The person whose device is abused for spamming doesn't notice anything odd as everything happens in the background.

This way, by achieving only a handful of infections, FluBot quickly increased the number of victims in certain places around the globe and spread like wildfire there.

As for the methods of distribution for "patient-zero," these include [laced apps](#) on the Google Play Store, fake [parcel delivery messages](#), [Flash Player app updates](#), and many more.

If you think FluBot might have infected your device, Europol suggests you perform a factory reset that wipes all data in the partitions that can host malware.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Russia no longer prosecuting REvil for US
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/06/01/hopes-russian-help-ransomware-are-officially-dead/
GIST	<p>Russia seems to be no longer going after REvil hackers</p> <p>It's over. Any lingering hope that Russian President Vladimir Putin might put a stop to the barrage of ransomware attacks hitting U.S. targets is officially dead.</p> <p>Russian prosecutors appeared poised to suspend the only case they'd ever brought against top-shelf ransomware hackers, the Russian outlet Kommersant reports. The hackers were alleged members of the REvil gang, which U.S. officials have blamed for the largest ever U.S. ransomware attack, which hit IT service provider Kaseya last year.</p>

The prosecutors are now highly unlikely to bring charges for that or any other REvil hacks that hit U.S. victims, the Russian outlet reported. The prosecutors blamed the United States for not sharing enough information to continue with the cases, according to the Kommersant article, which was titled “America doesn’t care about Russian hackers.”

Adding insult to injury: The prosecutors are mulling a deal to put the hackers to work for state security services “in the fight against hackers from Ukraine.”

- “The Russians were only going to cooperate if they thought it was in their interest. ... And I don’t think they see any benefit right now,” **Chris Painter**, a former top State Department cyber official, told me.

The upshot: This means the Biden administration will face an even tougher fight to curtail the damage of ransomware — going up against an enemy that can act with relative impunity as long as its members remain on Russian soil.

Expectations were never high that a diplomatic approach would work with Russia on ransomware — even inside the Biden administration. But there was some optimism when Russian officials [first arrested](#) 14 alleged members of the REvil crew in January, saying the raids were conducted by U.S. request.

- The arrests came roughly six months after Biden [demanded](#) at a Geneva summit that Putin halt Russia-based ransomware attacks that target U.S. firms in critical sectors, such as finance, pipelines and transportation. He made the demand not long after an attack against Colonial Pipeline by the Russia-based DarkSide gang upended U.S. gas supplies and prompted panic buying.
- The arrests came when Russia was preparing to attack Ukraine but had not yet launched its invasion. **Analysts speculated the arrests may have been intended as a signal that cooperation on ransomware was possible — but only if the United States held back on imposing sanctions or other retaliation once the invasion occurred.** That obviously wasn’t a bargain the Biden administration accepted.
- Most cyber analysts agree that while Russia-based criminal ransomware gangs don’t report directly to the government, they operate with the Kremlin’s tacit approval and Putin could restrict their targets if he chose.

Russia’s reversal essentially brings U.S. officials back to a familiar but increasingly frustrating status quo — one in which they continually push for rules of the road in cyberspace that are routinely ignored by Russia, China and other adversaries.

- More than a decade of cyberspace negotiations with those adversaries have yielded almost no significant breakthroughs.
- The sole exception is a deal former president **Barack Obama** [struck](#) with Chinese President **Xi Jinping** that restricted cyberespionage conducted solely for the economic benefit of Chinese and U.S. companies. That deal held for about a year, but China largely stopped complying with it early in the Trump administration.

“Things could change and Russia could see it as in their interest to cooperate. None of us can look in a crystal ball and know what’s coming. But that change doesn’t seem probable in the near future,” said Painter, who’s now president of the board of the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise.

What’s next? Without fear of a Russian crackdown, will there be more major ransomware attacks as disruptive as Colonial?

Maybe not.

Ransomware gangs have their own political and economic considerations to worry about — and it’s generally agreed that hacks that draw a lot of attention from the U.S. government tend to backfire.

	<p>In the case of Colonial, the Justice Department clawed back \$2.3 million in ransom money the pipeline paid the DarkSide gang. The gang announced it was going out of business shortly after the attack but later returned under a new name.</p> <p>“If you can make a lot of money without generating a lot of heat, you’re generally better off,” Painter said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/01 Ransomware attacks: under 96hrs encrypt
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransomware-attacks-need-less-than-four-days-to-encrypt-systems/
GIST	<p>The duration of ransomware attacks in 2021 averaged 92.5 hours, measured from initial network access to payload deployment. In 2020, ransomware actors spent an average of 230 hours to complete their attacks and 1637.6 hours in 2019.</p> <p>This change reflects a more streamlined approach that developed gradually over the years to make large-scale operations more profitable.</p> <p>At the same time, improvements in incident response and threat detection have forced threat actors to move quicker, to leave defenders with a smaller reaction margin.</p> <p>From access broker to encryption</p> <p>The data was collected by researchers at IBM's X-Force team from incidents analyzed in 2021. They also noticed a closer collaboration between initial access brokers and ransomware operators.</p> <p>Previously, network access brokers might wait for multiple days or even weeks before they found a buyer for their network access.</p> <p>In addition, some ransomware gangs now have direct control over the initial infection vector, an example being Conti taking over the TrickBot malware operation.</p> <p>Malware that breaches corporate networks is quickly leveraged to enable post-exploitation stages of the attack, sometimes completing its objectives in mere minutes.</p> <p>In terms of the tools and methods that ransomware actors use, Cobalt Strike is common for interactive sessions, RDP for lateral movement, Mimikatz and LSASS dump for credentials, and SMB + WMIC and Psexec are typically used for deploying payloads on the network hosts.</p> <p>Faster detection but not enough</p> <p>The performance of threat detection and response systems in 2021 improved since 2019 but this was not sufficient, the researchers say.</p> <p>The most impressive development in this area is endpoint detection solutions. In 2019, only 8% of targeted organizations had such a capability, while in 2021, this percentage grew to 36%.</p> <p>In terms of alerts generated by security tools, IBM X-Force data shows that 42% of attacked organizations were warned in a timely manner in 2019. Last year, alerts were delivered in 64% of network intrusion cases.</p> <p>While these figures show a gradual improvement in detection, there’s still a significant gap that threat actors can take advantage of.</p> <p>Outlook</p>

	<p>Despite the defense improvements, ransomware continues to be a significant threat as actors adopted a highly targeted approach and turn to manual hacking to move inside the victim network and maintain a low profile until the final stage of the attack, system encryption.</p> <p>Clearly, ransomware adversaries have gotten faster at what they do. An example from April 2022 presented a case of an IcedID malware infection leading to Quantum ransomware deployment in just 3 hours and 44 minutes.</p> <p>Also, the encryption process is quicker these days. Once it starts, in many cases it's very difficult to stop it before considerable damage occurs.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Racist, violent ideas: fringe to mainstream
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/01/technology/fringe-mainstream-social-media.html
GIST	<p>On March 30, the young man accused of the mass shooting at a Tops grocery store in Buffalo surfed through a smorgasbord of racist and antisemitic websites online. On BitChute, a video sharing site known for hosting right-wing extremism, he listened to a lecture on the decline of the American middle class by a Finnish extremist. On YouTube he found a lurid video of a car driving through Black neighborhoods in Detroit.</p> <p>Over the course of the week that followed, his online writing shows, he lingered in furtive chat rooms on Reddit and 4chan but also read articles on race in HuffPost and Medium. He watched local television news reports of gruesome crimes. He toggled between “documentaries” on extremist websites and gun tutorials on YouTube.</p> <p>The young man, who was indicted by a grand jury last week, has been portrayed by the authorities and some media outlets as a troubled outcast who acted alone when he killed 10 Black people in the grocery store and wounded three more. In fact, he dwelled in numerous online communities where he and others consumed and shared racist and violent content.</p> <p>As the number of mass shootings escalate, experts say many of the disturbing ideas that fuel the atrocities are no longer relegated to a handful of tricky-to-find dark corners of the web. More and more outlets, both fringe and mainstream, host bigoted content, often in the name of free speech. And the inability — or unwillingness — of online services to contain violent content threatens to draw more people toward hateful postings.</p> <p>Many images and text that the young man had in his extensive writings, which included a diary and a 180-page “manifesto,” have circulated for years online. Often, they have infiltrated some of the world’s most popular sites, like Reddit and Twitter. His path to radicalization, illustrated in these documents, reveals the limits of the efforts by companies like Twitter and Google to moderate posts, images and videos that promote extremism and violence. Enough of that content remains that it can open a pipeline for users to find more extreme websites only a click or two away.</p> <p>“It’s quite prolific on the internet,” said Eric K. Ward, a senior fellow at the Southern Poverty Law Center who is also executive director at the Western States Center, a nonprofit research organization. “It’s not just going to fall in your lap; you have to start looking for it. But once you start looking for it, the problem is that it starts to rain down on a person in abundance.”</p> <p>The Buffalo attack has renewed focus on the role that social media and other websites continue to play in acts of violent extremism, with criticism coming from the public as well as government officials.</p> <p>“The fact that this act of barbarism, this execution of innocent human beings, could be livestreamed on social media platforms and not taken down within a second says to me that there is a responsibility out there,” Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York said after the shooting in Buffalo. Four days later the state’s attorney general, Letitia James, announced that she had begun an investigation into the role the platforms played.</p>

Facebook pointed to its rules and policies that prohibit hateful content. In a statement, a spokeswoman said the platform detects over 96 percent of content tied to hate organizations before it is reported. Twitter declined to comment. Some of the social media posts on Facebook, Twitter and Reddit that The New York Times identified through reverse image searches were deleted; some of the accounts that shared the images were suspended.

The man charged in the killings, Payton Gendron, 18, detailed his attack on Discord, a chat app that emerged from the video game world in 2015, and streamed it live on Twitch, which Amazon owns. The company managed to take down his video within two minutes, but many of the sources of disinformation he cited remain online even now.

His paper trail provides a chilling glimpse into how he prepared a deadly assault online, culling tips on weaponry and tactics and finding inspiration in fellow racists and previous attacks that he largely mimicked with his own. Altogether, the content formed a twisted and racist view of reality. The gunman considered the ideas to be an alternative to mainstream views.

“How does one prevent a shooter like me you ask?” he wrote on Discord in April, more than a month before the shooting. “The only way is to prevent them from learning the truth.”

His writings map in detail the websites that motivated him. Much of the information he cobbled together in his writings involved links or images he had cherry-picked to match his racist views, reflecting the kind of online life he lived.

By his own account, the young man’s radicalization began not long after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, when he was largely restricted to his home like millions of other Americans. He described getting his news mostly from Reddit before joining 4chan, the online message board. He followed topics on guns and the outdoors before finding another devoted to politics, ultimately settling in a place that allowed a toxic mélange of racist and extremist disinformation.

Although he frequented sites like 4chan known to be on the fringes, he also spent considerable time on mainstream sites, according to his own record, especially YouTube, where he found graphic scenes from police cameras and videos describing gun tips and tricks. As the day of the attack neared, the gunman watched more YouTube videos about mass shootings and police officers engaged in gunfights.

YouTube said it had reviewed all the videos that appeared in the diary. Three videos were removed because they linked to websites that violated YouTube’s firearms policy, which “prohibits content intended to instruct viewers how to make firearms, manufacture accessories that convert a firearm to automatic fire, or livestreaming content that shows someone handling a firearm,” according to Jack Malon, a YouTube spokesman.

At the center of the shooting, like others before it, was a false conviction that an international Jewish conspiracy intends to supplant white voters with immigrants who will gradually take over political power in America.

The conspiracy, known the “great replacement theory,” has roots reaching back at least to the czarist Russian antisemitic hoax called “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” which purported to be a Jewish plot to overtake Christianity in Europe.

It resurfaced more recently in the works of two French novelists, Jean Raspail and Renaud Camus, who, four decades apart, imagined waves of immigrants taking power in France. It was Mr. Camus, a socialist turned far-right populist, who popularized the term “le grand remplacement” in a novel by that name in 2011.

Mr. Gendron, according to the documents he posted, seemed to have read none of those; instead he attributed the “great replacement” notion to the online writings posted by the gunman who murdered 51 Muslims at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019.

After that attack, New Zealand’s prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, spearheaded an international pact, called the Christchurch Call, that saw government and major tech companies commit to eliminate terrorist and extremist content online. Though the agreement carried no legal penalties, the Trump administration refused to sign, citing the principle of free speech.

Mr. Gendron’s experience online shows that the writings and video clips associated with the Christchurch shooting remain available to inspire other acts of racially motivated violence. He referred to both repeatedly.

The Anti-Defamation League warned last year that the “great replacement” had moved from the fringes of white supremacist beliefs toward the mainstream, pointing to the chants of protesters at the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Va., that erupted in violence and the commentaries of Tucker Carlson on Fox News.

“Most of us don’t know the original story,” Mr. Ward of the Southern Poverty Law Center said. “What we know is the narrative, and the narrative of the great replacement theory has been credentialized by elected officials and personalities to such an extent that the origins of the story no longer need to be told. People are beginning to just understand it as if they might understand conventional wisdom. And that’s what is frightening.”

For all the efforts some major social media platforms have made to moderate content online, the algorithms they use — often meant to show users posts that they will read, watch and click — can accelerate the spread of disinformation and other harmful content

Media Matters for America, a liberal-leaning nonprofit, said last month that its researchers found at least 50 ads on Facebook over the last two years promoting aspects of the “great replacement” and related themes. Many of the ads came from candidates for political office, even though the company, now known as Meta, announced in 2019 that it would bar white nationalist and white separatist content from Facebook and Instagram.

The organization’s researchers also found that 907 posts on the same themes on right-wing sites drew more 1.5 million engagements, far more than posts intended to debunk them.

Although Mr. Gendron’s video of the shooting was removed from Twitch, it resurfaced on 4chan, even while he was still at the scene of the crime. The video has since spread to other fringe platforms like Gab and ultimately mainstream platforms like Twitter, Reddit and Facebook.

The advent of social media has in a fairly short period of time enabled nefarious ideas and conspiracies that once simmered in relative isolation to proliferate through society, bringing together people animated by hate, said Angelo Carusone, the president of Media Matters for America.

“They’re not isolated anymore,” he said. “They’ve been connected.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Ransomware group claims Foxconn breach
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/ransomware-group-claims-have-breached-foxconn-factory
GIST	Cybercriminals claim to have breached the systems of an important Foxconn factory in Mexico and they are threatening to leak stolen files if the company doesn’t pay a ransom. Foxconn Baja California, located in the city of Tijuana at the border with California, specializes in medical devices, consumer electronics and industrial operations. The facility has 5,000 employees.

A threat group that uses the LockBit 2.0 ransomware claims to have hit this factory and is threatening to release stolen information on June 11, unless the victim pays up.

It's unclear if the ransomware attack had any impact on operational technology (OT) systems.

SecurityWeek has reached out to the electronics manufacturing giant, but we have yet to receive a response.

This is not the first time Foxconn has been hit by ransomware. In December 2020, the company confirmed that some of its systems in the United States had been targeted in a cyberattack after the DoppelPaymer ransomware group started leaking files allegedly stolen from the company.

While Foxconn said at the time that the attack had impacted US systems, the hackers claimed to have breached a facility in Mexico. The cybercriminals demanded more than \$34 million in bitcoin.

LockBit 2.0 hackers recently also claimed to have stolen files from tire and rubber giant [Bridgestone Americas](#).

In February, the FBI released [indicators of compromise \(IoCs\) for LockBit 2.0 attacks](#) and noted that the ransomware's operators typically breach enterprise networks by purchasing access or by leveraging unpatched vulnerabilities, zero-day exploits, or insider access.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 How Kremlin infiltrated Russia's Facebook
SOURCE	https://www.wired.co.uk/article/vk-russia-democracy
GIST	<p>In December 2021, two months before the invasion of Ukraine, the new CEO of Russia's second-most-popular social media network sat next to an immaculate Christmas tree and introduced himself to staff in a video message. For the occasion, Vladimir Kiriyenko—a man usually only pictured in suits—donned dark jeans with New Balance trainers. Throughout the one-hour video, he mostly avoided eye contact with the camera, instead directing his comments about the company's future to Ochir Mandzhikov, VK's vice president of communications. But not everyone at VKontakte (VK), Russia's equivalent to Facebook, was convinced by their new leader's performance.</p> <p>After watching the video, which was shared internally, one VK employee told WIRED that it felt like his new boss was from another world. "Usually when an IT founder speaks, they talk like a friend, about facts, about actions," they said, requesting anonymity because they still work at the company. "Vladimir speaks like a politician because he talks without actually sharing any information."</p> <p>Since Russia invaded Ukraine, VK has been on the front line of the Kremlin's information war. Under Kiriyenko's leadership, the platform banned its users from spreading what the Kremlin considers false information about the war, while its new CEO has featured on Europe's sanctions list. Vladimir Sergeevich Kiriyenko "supports Vladimir Putin's aim for greater control over the internet," the sanctions list reads.</p> <p>The controversy surrounding Kiriyenko's rise to the top role at VK stems from his family's connection to President Vladimir Putin. Kiriyenko's father, Sergey, is one of Putin's most powerful aides and is considered the country's domestic policy czar. Kiriyenko senior has also been an active lobbyist for the creation of a sovereign Russian internet, a proposal that would sever Russia's internet infrastructure from the rest of the world and give the Kremlin much greater control.</p> <p>The appointment of Kiriyenko junior, who previously held a leadership role at state-owned telecom company Rostelecom, has been interpreted by analysts as the latest chapter in VK's gradual loss of independence from Russia's government. "VK has long since become a company completely controlled by the Kremlin," says Sarkis Darbinyan, head of the legal department at Russian digital rights group Roskomsvoboda. "With Kiriyenko, all the requirements of the presidential administration and Roskomnadzor are now fulfilled with lightning speed." VK declined a request to comment for this story.</p>

WIRED spoke to eight current and former VK employees, including its former CEO, who described how the company became increasingly compliant with the authorities as it pursued its ambitions for growth, transforming from an independent tech startup to a corporation controlled by Alisher Usmanov, a man both the UK and EU [describe](#) as a pro-Kremlin oligarch. In 2021, Russia's state-owned energy company Gazprom bought out Usmanov and paved the way for Kiriyenko's appointment. If the Kremlin has a vested interest in how a company is run, it will find ways to exert its influence, says Alyssa Demus, an expert in Eurasian politics and information warfare at US think tank RAND. "In the case of VK, it wasn't necessarily an overnight hostile takeover so much as a slow burn, pushing out the former creator and CEO and co-opting the business from the inside out."

VK has become a major beneficiary of Russia's recent [ban on its competitors](#). In March, the platform reached a record [50 million daily users](#), becoming the country's most popular social media site after Facebook and Instagram were blocked. VK's newsfeed views jumped 24 percent and video views surged 15 percent in the first month of the war, [according](#) to Moscow-based data company Brand Analytics. VK has also been actively chasing its competitors' clients, publishing a step-by-step guide for businesses about how to migrate away from international [platforms](#).

The company VK has become is drastically different from the one that was founded back in 2006 by Pavel Durov, who later set up messaging app Telegram. In the early days, the content on VK was a microcosm of the best and worst of Russia's internet, something the government would later leverage against it. Pirated music and pornography flowed freely on the platform, and the authorities [complained](#) about child sex abuse materials on the site. There was just one guy in charge of content moderation at the time, according to developer Oleg Illarionov, who joined VK in 2010.

"We had gotten used to the idea that the internet is open, it's free, we can do whatever we want, and we only had to comply with our own moderation rules," says Andrew Rogozov, who started at the company in 2007 and later became CEO. "In those days, there was no regulation," he adds. "And the [government takedown] requests were very random and spontaneous."

Russia's internet remained unregulated until 2012, the year after allegations of electoral fraud drove thousands of people to [protest around the country, in what was called the "snow-revolution"](#). "The leading faction in the Kremlin realized that social media was a major information channel, and then they began to try to clamp down on it," says Vladimir Barash, chief scientist at social network analysis company Graphika.

Just months after his 2012 reelection, Putin approved a [law](#) that created a blacklist of websites that the government deemed harmful to children. From then on, the relationship between VK and the authorities deteriorated. Despite a [leak](#) that appeared to show Durov discussing sharing users' private data with Russia's security services, people who worked alongside Durov at the time said he was committed to free speech. "From the start, he decided not to comply with anything," says Illarionov. "I would say he was the strongest admirer of free speech out of everybody I know."

Tension between the company and the government boiled over in 2014, after VK [refused](#) to remove posts and groups linked to the Euromaidan protest movement in Ukraine, company insiders told WIRED. That year, the [authorities searched VK's offices](#) and police accused Durov of running over a policeman's foot with a white Mercedes, forcing the founder [into hiding](#). Durov, who did not reply to WIRED's request for comment, [resigned](#) in April, saying later he was pressured to sell his 12 percent stake in the business. After VK's two other cofounders also sold their shares, the platform ended up under full control of the Mail.ru group, an internet business majority-owned by Usmanov. The British government, which sanctioned Usmanov in March, [describes](#) him as a leading oligarch and Putin associate.

But Durov did not walk away empty-handed; it's estimated he received around [\\$300 million](#) as part of the deal. "This was the same strategy that was used when there was a consolidation of the oil industry," says Ruben Enikolopov, economics professor at Barcelona's Pompeu Fabra University. "So they were not forcing people to sell for free but pressuring people to sell their assets."

Rogozov, who was head of development under Durov, took over the day-to-day running of the platform in his new role as chief operating officer, according to multiple people that spoke to WIRED. Under his leadership, change happened quickly. Developers complained that revenue was prioritized over user experience, and new hires diluted the company culture. “We needed to generate revenue in order to grow the company,” says Rogozov. “Many people inside the company struggled with that transition because before we only focused on users. VK was never a cash cow, but the market was expecting revenue.”

The attitude to government requests changed too. When Durov was still in charge in December 2012, a member of a pro-Alexei Navalny group on the platform [published](#) messages exchanged with him. “Recently the FSB asked us to close opposition groups, like yours,” Durov claimed in the message. “By principle we don't do that. We don't know yet how it will end for us.” The same day, Durov tweeted what he called his “official response” to FSB requests: a [picture](#) of a dog wearing a hoodie with its tongue out. Durov did not respond to requests to comment.

When Rogozov took over, he says he cooperated with the authorities while trying to convey to regulators that if internet regulation was too strict, VK would not be able to compete with the US platforms already gaining traction in Russia. “The tactic was, we realized that when you are working in the Russian market and when you do business here, you need to comply with the rules,” he says. Illarionov remembers how Rogozov would try to reassure the team, explaining why content had to be banned. “Andrew would usually come and explain why it happened,” he says. “He’d say, ‘Guys, we have a court decision and we are located in Russia, so we have to comply with the court decision.’”

But that philosophy became more controversial as new laws became more extreme, such as the 2016 Yarovaya law [that](#) forced internet companies including VK to store messages, posts, images, video, and metadata for up to six months. Since Rogozov made the decision that VK would be a compliant company, the number of laws it has to abide by has snowballed. “Now VK automatically unloads all information from the Roskomnadzor blacklist, blocking all of the prohibited content, strictly moderates content, promotes pro-governmental content, complies with the requirements of the “Yarovaya law” by collecting all metadata and storing users’ correspondence, and finally discloses all data to law enforcement that initiate criminal proceedings against users,” lists Darbinyan. A VK insider with knowledge of the company’s relationship with the authorities confirmed to WIRED that the company has shared users’ private messages with the authorities when asked to provide evidence for court cases.

Outsiders quickly noticed the new, closer relationship with the government. “To date, no other social network in Russia cooperates so thoroughly and unquestioningly,” [said](#) a 2017 report by digital rights group Article 19. Under Rogozov’s leadership, reports also intensified that VK users were being arrested for the posts or memes they shared on the platform. Until 2021, the majority of VK users punished under Russian anti-extremism laws were targeted for sharing xenophobic posts, says Maria Kravchenko, chief of the misuse of anti-extremism board at Russian NGO SOVA. But activists were affected too. In 2015, convicted 26-year-old Darya Polyudova was [sentenced](#) to two years in prison for three VK posts. One read: “No war in Ukraine but a revolution in Russia!”

In response to the arrests, VK introduced privacy changes in 2018, hiding details about which accounts had shared posts and enabling users to make their profiles private. One employee who worked at VK at the time said these changes were introduced partly to protect the audience but partly to protect VK’s reputation. At the same time VK became more compliant with the government, US services like Instagram and WhatsApp were becoming more popular in Russia. Developers working at VK at the time described feeling like they were constantly catching up. “Every time Facebook or Instagram or WhatsApp or anyone else invented some new feature, we tried to replicate it,” says Alexey Storozhev, who was an iOS developer between 2014 and 2018.

But the reputational damage caused by the arrests was nothing compared to what was about to happen in Ukraine. In May 2017, the [Ukrainian government banned VK](#) as well as other online services like online network Odnoklassniki for “waging information aggression and propaganda against Ukraine,” Overnight,

VK lost around 14 million users, Rogozov says. “I think it affected us way more than all the regulations that later took place in Russia.”

By the end of 2021, VK had merged with Mail.ru, which was [rebranded](#) as the VK Group, and the company was creaking under the pressure to grow fast enough to compete with US alternatives. VK had been overtaken by WhatsApp in the user number charts toward the end of 2021, according to [Statista](#). Instagram was not far behind. In the months before the invasion of Ukraine, the company was again “struggling,” according to Rogozov, and it was looking for investors. One former employee who was aware of the company’s financial position said what happened next was inevitable. “You have to choose investors to work with, and not so many of them can really invest those kinds of resources,” they said.

“The bigger you are, the more connected you are with the government. This is how business works in Russia.”

“In hindsight, [Kiriienko’s appointment] was probably preparation for war,” says Enikolopov. If that’s the case, it would mark the second time changes in the company’s management structure coincided with events in Ukraine. In 2014, the same year pro-Russian forces intervened in Crimea, [pro-Kremlin oligarch](#) Usmanov [took control](#) of VK. Two months after Kiriienko took over, Russian tanks rolled across the border into Ukraine. Both instances also took place as the company was struggling financially. The week after Durov was pushed out in 2014, Sony, Universal, and Warner all filed separate lawsuits against VK over pirated music. Before Gazprom took control of the platform in 2021, insiders told WIRED the company was again struggling to compete with US competitors and was looking for investors.

One former employee compared VK’s fate to the (scientifically dubious) fable of the [boiling frog](#): If a frog is dropped into boiling water, it will jump out, but if you put it in water that is slowly boiled, the frog doesn’t notice until it’s too late. “I think the Russian people and everybody connected to the internet are like this frog in normal water,” he says. “It started with one law for saving our children from offensive information, and now people in Russia are in a situation where they can write the word “war” on VK and spend [15 years in jail](#).”

[Return to Top](#)

Terror Conditions

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 German anti-terror group in Pittsburgh
SOURCE	https://www.post-gazette.com/news/crime-courts/2022/06/01/german-antiterrorism-organization-violence-prevention-network-launches-pittsburgh-operation-extremism-radicalization/stories/202206010109
GIST	<p>Imagine this scenario: A mother begins to notice a change in her teenage son, who spends an increasing amount of time online in chat rooms and on fringe forums. Around the house, the teen begins to spout racially charged, anti-immigrant sentiments.</p> <p>With nowhere to turn, she looks at his Google search history and finds he’s been researching where to purchase a firearm nearby.</p> <p>In the anonymity of the online world, it’s tough for outsiders to tell when someone slowly becomes radicalized by extremist groups. In Pittsburgh, which FBI officials recently warned was becoming a hotbed for far-right nationalist groups, a German-based nonprofit is hoping to intervene in these scenarios before they escalate to tragedy.</p> <p>The Violence Prevention Network convened in Downtown on Wednesday to announce its flagship U.S. operation. Board members explained that the choice to launch in Pittsburgh was highly deliberate given the city’s relationship to extremist groups.</p>

Citing the tragedy of the Tree of Life synagogue shooting coupled with budding activity from far-right groups like Sovereign Citizens and Patriot Front, VPN sees an opportunity to spot would-be extremists and deradicalize them through its unique intervention program.

“There’s many organizations that work in the field of violent extremism, and one thing that’s very important to us, is that we talk to extremists, not about them,” said Michele Leaman, a director at the Violence Prevention Network.

Alongside Judy Korn, a VPN co-founder and director, Ms. Leaman detailed VPN’s strategy in Germany that it plans to mirror here.

VPN staff members operate telephone and digital hotlines for friends and family of potential extremists, who can call to receive support and education on the early warning signs of extremist behavior both online and off.

According to Ms. Leaman, family members are advised on how to maintain their relationship with the at-risk person, instead of cutting them off completely before help becomes available.

Should the at-risk person escalate their behavior, Ms. Leaman said VPN works with law enforcement to monitor and report their activity. Staff also provides police departments with training on how to detect risks in other individuals.

Already, the nonprofit of 120 employees claims it’s prevented at least eight would-be terrorist attacks in Europe through its interventions, including extremist Islamic activity that would have targeted Christmas villages.

Ms. Korn said details or locations of the thwarted attempts could not be shared due to security concerns.

But because VPN values working alongside at-risk extremists, the nonprofit has a robust program in the German prison system that it hopes to remodel in Western Pennsylvania’s correctional facilities.

“Our training and our program won’t stop if they are in prison,” Ms. Korn explained. “We go on with the relationship, we go on with the dialogues.”

VPN claims that it’s worked with over 800 far-right extremists and over 1,000 Islamic extremists in German prisons, 50% of whom were sentenced on terrorism-related charges.

Operating in Berlin since 2002, the nonprofit has partnered with the country’s government along with the European Commission, a branch of the European Union.

Ms. Korn shared data provided by VPN that showed only around 13% of violent-offenders who passed through their education program were eventually reincarcerated, as opposed to the national German average of 41.5%.

Already, Ms. Leaman and Ms. Korn have presented their strategy to law enforcement in Fox Chapel, where one U.S. board member resides.

Anne Clarke Ronce, a U.S. team member, said on Wednesday that local law enforcement expressed interest in VPN’s services, as they receive increasing reports of potential far-right extremists in the Pittsburgh region.

Ms. Ronce mentioned their concern over the Iron City Militia, who self-describe on their website as a “well-regulated, well-trained, well-equipped and knowledgeable militia unit comprised of ordinary citizens, based out of the greater Pittsburgh area” that is a “last line of defense against a tyrannical government.”

	<p>VPN members cited additional concern over Sovereign Citizen members in Pittsburgh.</p> <p>The Southern Poverty Law Center, which monitors hate groups, classifies the Sovereign Citizen movement as racist and antisemitic, citing its founder's belief that "non-white people were not human, and that Jews possessed a satanic plot to take over the world."</p> <p>As of May, the nonprofit claims to have \$100,000 in funding secured for its U.S. launch, partially thanks to a German donor whose identity was not disclosed.</p> <p>After launching the hotline, VPN hopes to extend its program into Western Pennsylvania jails and prisons, although Ms. Leaman said that could take a year or more.</p> <p>One step includes hiring and training 15 "everyday heroes," staff specialists who work to deradicalize both rising and incarcerated extremists.</p> <p>The launch comes as the national conversation around extremism and gun-control reaches a high-water mark. In May alone, a racially motivated shooting in Buffalo left 10 Black people dead, while a gunman in Uvalde, Texas, terrorized Robb Elementary last week, claiming 21 lives — most of them young children.</p> <p>Bruce Bowden, a U.S. VPN board member, connected the events while he introduced Ms. Korn, who was visiting Pittsburgh from VPN's German office.</p> <p>"This trip was planned before the recent incidents in Texas and other places," Ms. Bowden said. "That's just a very horrible coincidence that those things happened just before they came. But it makes this, I think, all the more timely."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Buffalo suspect domestic terrorism charge
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/01/buffalo-shooting-suspect-charged-domestic-terrorism-hate
GIST	<p>A grand jury on Wednesday charged the white 18-year-old accused of fatally shooting 10 Black people at a Buffalo supermarket with domestic terrorism motivated by hate and 10 counts of first-degree murder.</p> <p>The suspect, who has been in custody since the 14 May shooting, is scheduled to be arraigned Thursday in Erie county court.</p> <p>The 25-count indictment also contains charges of murder and attempted murder as a hate crime and weapons possession.</p> <p>Payton Gendron had previously been charged with first-degree murder in the shooting, which also injured three people. He has pleaded not guilty. Prosecutors told a judge on 20 May the grand jury had voted to indict him but did not disclose charges, saying proceedings were ongoing.</p> <p>The domestic terrorism charge accuses the suspect of killing "because of the perceived race and/or color" of his victims.</p> <p>The former governor Andrew Cuomo proposed the domestic terrorism hate crime law in August 2019, in the wake of a mass shooting targeting Mexicans at a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas. The measure, called the Josef Neumann Hate Crimes Domestic Terrorism Act after an attack at a rabbi's house in Munsey, New York, was signed into law on 3 April 2020, and took effect on 1 November 2020.</p> <p>The charge, domestic acts of terrorism motivated by hate in the first degree, is punishable with a sentence of life imprisonment without parole.</p>

	<p>Murder charges were filed for each of the victims, who ranged in age from 32 to 86 and included eight shoppers, the store security guard and a church deacon who drove shoppers to and from the store with their groceries.</p> <p>The gunman, carrying an AR-15-style rifle he had recently bought, opened fire on Saturday afternoon shoppers at the only supermarket in the predominantly Black neighborhood.</p> <p>The shooting, followed 10 days later by a mass shooting that killed 19 children and two teachers inside an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, has renewed a national debate about gun control and violent extremism.</p> <p>Federal authorities also are investigating the possibility of hate crime charges against Gendron, who apparently detailed his plans and his racist motivation in hundreds of pages of writings he posted online shortly before the shooting. The attack was livestreamed from a helmet-mounted camera.</p> <p>Gendron drove about three hours from his home in Conklin, New York, intending to kill as many Black people as possible, investigators have said.</p> <p>His attorney, Brian Parker, said he had not seen the indictment and could not comment, adding that prosecution and defense attorneys had been barred by a judge from discussing the case publicly.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/02 Taliban campaign to eradicate poppy crop
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-taliban-launch-campaign-eradicate-poppy-crop-85127483
GIST	<p>WASHIR, Afghanistan -- Afghanistan's Taliban rulers have begun a campaign to eradicate poppy cultivation, aiming to wipe out the country's massive production of opium and heroin, even as farmers fear their livelihoods will be ruined at a time of growing poverty.</p> <p>On a recent day in Washir district in southern Helmand province, armed Taliban fighters stood guard as a tractor tore up a field of poppies. The field's owner stood nearby, watching.</p> <p>The Taliban, who took power in Afghanistan more than nine months ago, issued an edict in early April banning poppy cultivation throughout the country.</p> <p>Those violating the ban "will be arrested and tried according to Sharia laws in relevant courts," the Taliban deputy interior minister for counternarcotics, Mullah Abdul Haq Akhund, told The Associated Press in Helmand's provincial capital, Lashkar Gah.</p> <p>Afghanistan is the world's biggest opium producer and a major source for heroin in Europe and Asia. Production spiraled over the past 20 years despite billions of dollars spent by the U.S. trying to stop poppy cultivation.</p> <p>But the ban will likely strike a heavy blow to millions of impoverished farmers and day laborers who rely on proceeds from the crop to survive. The ban comes as Afghanistan's economy has collapsed, cut off from international funding in the wake of the Taliban takeover. Most of the population struggles to afford food, and the country has been suffering under its worst drought in years.</p> <p>Noor Mohammed, who owns one poppy field in Washir that was torn apart by Taliban tractors, said his plot of land is small and lacks water, so he can't survive by growing less profitable crops.</p> <p>"If we are not allowed to cultivate this crop, we will not earn anything," he said of his poppies.</p>

Day laborers can earn upwards of \$300 a month harvesting opium from the poppies. Villagers often rely on the promise of the upcoming poppy harvest to borrow money for staples such as flour, sugar, cooking oil and heating oil.

Helmand is the heartland of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. It appeared the new eradication campaign was targeting mainly those who planted their crops after the ban was announced. Many others who had planted earlier succeeded in harvesting, going from plant to plant, slicing the poppy's bulb, then scooping up the sap that oozes out, the raw material for opium.

Akhund, the deputy interior minister, said the Taliban were in touch with other governments and non-governmental organizations to work out alternative crops for farmers.

It's not known how many poppies were planted this season, how much was harvested and how many fields the Taliban have eradicated so far.

But Afghanistan's production has steadily risen, reaching new heights every year in recent years. In 2021, 177,000 hectares (438,000 acres) were planted with poppies, yielding enough opium to produce up to 650 tons of heroin, according to estimates by the U.N.'s Office on Drugs and Crime. That was an increase from up to 590 tons of heroin in 2020.

The total value of Afghanistan's opiates production in 2021 was \$1.8-\$2.7 billion, up to 14% of the country's GDP, exceeding the value of its legal exports, the UNODC said in its most recent report.

During their first time in power in the late 1990s, the Taliban also banned poppy cultivation and with a fierce campaign of destroying croplands nearly eradicated production within two years, according to the United Nations.

However, after the U.S.-led invasion that ousted the Taliban in 2001, many farmers returned to growing poppies.

Over the next nearly 20 years, Washington spent more than \$8 billion trying to eradicate Afghan poppy production. Instead, it only steadily increased: In 2002, around 75,000 hectares were planted with poppies, producing some 3,400 tons of opium. Last year, production was double that.

During the years-long Taliban insurgency, the movement reportedly made millions of dollars taxing farmers and middlemen to move their drugs outside Afghanistan. Senior officials of the U.S.-backed government also reportedly made millions on the flourishing drug trade.

Today, Afghanistan's opium output is greater than all other opium-producing countries combined. Nearly 80% of the heroin produced from Afghan opium reaches Europe through Central Asia and Pakistan.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	05/31 Pakistan, TTP agree to indefinite ceasefire
SOURCE	https://tribune.com.pk/story/2359319/pakistan-ttp-agree-to-indefinite-ceasefire-as-talks-continue
GIST	<p>PESHAWAR: As peace talks between Pakistani authorities and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) continue, both sides have expressed reservations over certain demands put forward by the opposite party in a meeting earlier this month but have decided to extend the current ceasefire for an indefinite time period.</p> <p>In order to break the stalemate, however, both sides have agreed to continue to hold the dialogue and have formed a three-member committee, with representatives from each side to iron out the differences. These talks will be moderated by Haqqani network chief Sirajuddin Haqqani.</p> <p>In the peace talks, the TTP is represented by Mufti Ghofran, Commander Zarar and Omar Khalid Khorasani while the Pakistani delegation comprises senior military and intelligence officials. A second committee has also been formed by the Pakistani authorities.</p>

The current talks between the two sides have been going on in Kabul since the start of this month and resulted in the extension of the ceasefire between the forces and the Taliban on two occasions.

During the meeting between Pakistan and TTP reported on May 18, the Taliban had asked the government to release its top and mid-tier commanders, stop operations in the ex-Fata region, and general amnesty and repatriation for the militants and their families.

Pakistan, in return, had asked them to stop targeting the Pakistani installations in cross-border attacks, extend the ceasefire and let the fencing of the Pak-Afghan border continue unhampered.

As a result of these talks, the ceasefire had been extended by 15 days, but there was no confirmation on the status of other demands. It was agreed that both sides would announce a ceasefire till the conclusion of the dialogue.

On May 10, the TTP had announced to [extend](#) its ceasefire announced due to Eidul Fitr till May 15 after a Jirga of Mehsud tribes said it would [broker](#) talks between Pakistan and the Taliban. The Jirga had also visited Kabul to meet the TTP chief to facilitate the dialogue.

The Afghan Taliban, who stormed to power last year in August, are facilitating the talks between the two sides, as confirmed by their spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, in good faith, strives for a successful negotiation process and expects both sides to be tolerant and flexible," he tweeted on May 18 after the talks.

It may be noted here that after the government of the Taliban came to power, the attacks on Pakistani forces from across the border increased considerably, resulting in the loss of dozens of lives. In a bid to stop these attacks, Pakistan had [conducted](#) a drone strike inside Afghanistan as well.

A UN report released last week claimed that the TTP was the militant group that benefitted most from the Afghan Taliban's ascent to power. According to the report, TTP had a strength of about 3,000 to 4,000 fighters in the neighbouring country.

[Return to Top](#)

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	06/02 What's behind rise ADHD diagnoses?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jun/02/tiktok-trends-or-the-pandemic-whats-behind-the-rise-in-adhd-diagnoses
GIST	<p>Dani Donovan almost didn't post the illustration that changed her life: a deadpan visual gag that translated her ADHD-addled storytelling style into a 12-point flowchart.</p> <p>When she released her drawing into the Twittersphere in December 2018, she figured that few people would see it. Instead the post went viral "almost immediately", amassing more than 100m views across social media channels. Just over a year later, she quit her corporate graphic design job to make ADHD comics full-time.</p> <p>Donovan, now 31, has become something of a grand doyenne in the widening arena of ADHD influencers, a niche that virtually didn't exist when she shared her inaugural post just three-and-a-half years ago.</p> <p>ADHD, or attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, is having a moment. On TikTok, videos tagged #ADHD have been viewed more than 11bn times. Most of the creators are 20- and 30-somethings who identify as having the executive function disorder, whose symptoms commonly include difficulties in concentrating and regulating emotions. Some are practicing clinicians who use their platforms to correct misconceptions (and discourage self-diagnosis). Altogether, they post to ever-expanding audiences.</p>

The trend nods at a surge in adult ADHD diagnoses more than a decade in the making. The steady climb of juvenile ADHD was already a source of concern (and eye-rolls). But between 2007 and 2016, the reported incidence of adult [ADHD shot up by 123%](#) in the US, far outpacing the rate increase in child and adolescent cases. In the mid-2010s, [adults replaced children](#) as the primary market for ADHD medication.

There is some anecdotal indication that the phenomenon has at least held pace during the pandemic and, more likely, accelerated. In a survey published in March by [ADDitude](#) magazine, more than a quarter of 2,365 adult readers of the ADHD-focused publication reported that they were given a [formal ADHD diagnosis](#) within the past year. The online pharmacy SingleCare saw a [16% increase](#) in prescriptions for generic Adderall, a popular ADHD stimulant medication, from the start of last year to the beginning of 2022.

Some attribute the pattern to social media. Donovan attests to this firsthand, that she's gotten more than 1,000 messages from people who pursued clinical assessments and received diagnoses thanks to her content. The decade-old Reddit page [r/ADHD grew from 643,000 subscribers](#) in March 2020 to more than 1.4 million today, neatly charting an increase in ADHD curiosity (if not necessarily diagnoses) that coincides with the pandemic. But the rising prevalence of the disorder isn't so much a fad fueled by social media overexposure as the entanglement of distinct cultural and diagnostic threads, each of them knotty in their own right. The age of ADHD is a clash of science and society, and the discontents of each.

It helps to break things down. There's ADHD as a neurodevelopmental impairment with known anatomical correlates (think [smaller amygdalas and hippocampuses](#) in the brain), and ADHD as a clinical diagnosis with hefty profit potential for the pharmaceutical industry. Then there's #ADHD as an algorithmic content incentive and affirmation of experience.

"One thing that makes ADHD a unique diagnosis, in some ways, is that there are social benefits to having the diagnosis that you don't always see for other mental health difficulties," says Dr Margaret Sibley, a clinical psychologist and researcher who specializes in ADHD. "People are able to take an ADHD diagnosis to a school or a workplace and have reduced responsibilities because of it, or accommodation for testing, et cetera. When there are benefits like that in place, you have different kinds of consumers."

In other words, ADHD can grant people a measure of grace for falling short of productivity expectations that would strain most human beings' baseline capacity. To that end, the pandemic may have provided an even greater incentive to seek out ADHD diagnoses. With the onset of Covid-19, many people found themselves suddenly unable to read books or maintain basic email correspondence, [their focus](#) completely and uncharacteristically shot. The phenomenon has been so pronounced and widespread that it's fed a media subgenre of [psychological reassurance-explainers](#), assuaging readers that reduced cognitive horsepower is to be expected, given the "unprecedented" challenges of the times.

The striking overlap between ADHD symptoms and garden variety "[pandemic brain](#)" only compounds common misunderstandings of the former. Simply, [ADHD symptoms](#) can look and sound a whole lot like the struggles that define many people's everyday workflows, which are so often fragmented by push notifications and digital dopamine hits. Who *doesn't* have trouble multitasking or following through with tasks? And who *isn't* fighting the urge to impulse-scroll social media during the particularly dull moments of any given afternoon? In the past two years, these difficulties have only become more pronounced.

But whether or not ADHD is actively overdiagnosed is a separate question, and one without simple answers. Two things are certain. For one, research suggests that ADHD isn't a clear-cut disorder that a person either totally does or does not have, but a combination of challenges that present [on a spectrum of impairment](#). According to Sibley, rigorous standards of psychiatric assessment should be able to determine between a clinical presentation of disorder and the mere presence of certain ADHD traits.

The second certainty is that the stimulant medications often prescribed to treat ADHD are extremely contentious. Skeptics are quick to point out that drugs such as Adderall and Vyvanse are, effectively, industry-regulated dosages of speed. Whether or not everyone diagnosed with ADHD has the disorder, it is

a statement of uneasy fact that most people's productivity would see improvement from the drugs prescribed to treat it.

The result is what Sibley characterizes as a “philosophical debate”, albeit one often cloaked in the language of safety.

“You could ask yourself a similar question about people using steroids in sports,” says Sibley. “People can raise pros and cons, but ultimately it comes down to what people value more than it does a safety issue, because you can safely manage stimulants in anyone, even a person without ADHD.”

Debates aside, ADHD diagnoses – and the medications that treat the condition – [have become much easier to obtain](#) during the pandemic. Social distancing measures removed legislative barriers that previously restricted remote providers from prescribing controlled substances, a class of drugs that includes many ADHD medications. This allowed a number of venture-backed telehealth startups to expand their provisions, and led some to redirect focus to diagnosing ADHD and prescribing medications to treat it.

The shift has not gone unnoticed. The same algorithmic mechanisms that boost the visibility of #ADHD TikToks and Instagram memes also promote ADHD treatment offerings from startups with take-control names such as Klarity, Done, and Cerebral. Promoted ads for these companies have become the inescapable window dressing of many people's social media feeds.

But pushback is under way. At the end of April, a former Cerebral executive [launched a labor lawsuit](#) against his former employer, alleging that he was fired for voicing concern that the company had “egregiously put profits and growth before patient safety” by overprescribing medications for ADHD. In recent weeks, a growing number of online pharmacies and brick-and-mortar drugstore chains have [stopped filling prescriptions](#) for controlled substances such as Adderall placed by telehealth providers.

Outsize commotion over stimulant medications paints a misleading picture of what some patients actually want or need. “The thing is that meds are not a panacea,” says Joy Hui Lin, a southern California-based freelance journalist in her early 40s. “You need structure.”

Hui Lin was diagnosed roughly five years ago, after recognizing her own struggles in an article about ADHD in women. She soon learned that because of gendered social expectations and societal bias, ADHD is often misdiagnosed or [overlooked in girls](#) and women, especially [girls](#) and women of color.

What she'd internalized as shortcomings of character turned out to be textbook traits of the disorder. She also realized that, while medications provided a helpful assist, she benefited most from the implementation of routines and processes to help stay on top of her daily responsibilities.

A similar vantage is echoed by “Cindy Noir”, the [online persona](#) of a 26-year-old social media content creator based in Dallas. Last summer, a licensed psychotherapist got in touch with Noir after seeing a TikTok livestream in which Noir vented about her difficulty completing household tasks and communicating ideas in pace with her rapid-fire brain. The therapist was unable to give Noir an official ADHD diagnosis from a single phone call and email exchanges, but expressed the opinion that Noir likely meets diagnostic criteria for the disorder and recommended that she seek assessment.

“Unfortunately, she said as a woman and as a minority, actually being diagnosed with ADHD is one of the biggest uphill battles because they will diagnose your symptoms as other things and not as ADHD,” says Noir, who is Black. She ultimately opted against pursuing a formal ADHD evaluation or pharmaceutical treatment path because of a lack of health insurance coverage, but says that her life has improved from adopting organizational strategies recommended to ADHD patients, such as making to-do lists and setting electronic reminders. She feels in control, empowered.

What mainstream debate often overlooks is that most people are trying the best that they can with the resources at their disposal. Companies' cynical exploitation of individuals' deepest vulnerabilities, amid the amoral landscape of a for-profit health care system, merits scrutiny. But it seems unfair to dismiss the

	<p>relief people find in an ADHD diagnosis, or from social media content that validates and supports their efforts to live their fullest lives.</p> <p>“I see the relief and the belonging that has started to occur from people who have felt like they didn’t fit anywhere,” says Donovan, the ADHD comics artist. “They found this space to be, like, ‘Oh OK, these are my people’. These are my people.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/02 Avian flu takes growing toll on wildlife
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/02/geese-skuas-cranes-foxes-avian-flu-takes-growing-toll-on-wildlife-aoe
GIST	<p>As he walked along the shoreline of a Highland loch on a fine May evening, ecologist and wildlife photographer Peter Stronach could hardly believe what he was seeing. The beach was littered with dead and dying birds: male eider ducks, several species of gulls, a gannet, a puffin and no fewer than 26 pink-footed geese, which should by now have been on the way back to their Icelandic breeding grounds.</p> <p>In all, Stronach recorded 72 individual birds of 17 species at Loch Fleet national nature reserve on the east coast of Scotland on that one day, plus many more in the following days.</p> <p>But these birds had not been killed by a passing predator; nor were they the hapless victims of a sudden storm at sea. The cause of these deaths was a highly infectious – and for birds, usually lethal – virus. Avian influenza H5N1 or, as it is more commonly known, bird flu, is back with a vengeance.</p> <p>What really worries Stronach is the range of species he found. “Earlier this spring, we noticed that avian flu was restricted to the geese; but since then it has spread to other wildfowl, raptors and seabirds.” In previous years, it mainly occurred in winter; now, he says, it is affecting the breeding populations of iconic coastal species such as the eider.</p> <p>Elsewhere in Scotland earlier this month about 20 great skuas were found dead or dying on Fair Isle, with more reported from other breeding colonies on the Shetland Isles. This followed a serious outbreak of bird flu in 2021, when hundreds of skuas died.</p> <p>For any species, these deaths are a serious setback, especially at the height of the breeding season. But for great skuas and pink-footed geese, this news is especially troubling. Scotland hosts 60% of the global breeding population of great skuas, and 90% of the world population of pink-footed geese overwinter in the UK. For these two species, both of which are on the amber list of birds of conservation concern, bird flu could pose a serious threat to their long-term future.</p> <p>Bird flu is by no means confined to the UK. In December 2021, an outbreak in the Hula valley, in northern Israel, killed more than 5,000 cranes out of a wintering population of 30,000 birds. In what the Israeli government called “the deadliest wildlife disaster in the nation’s history”, workers wearing hazmat suits were photographed collecting the corpses. After the outbreak, farmers were instructed to slaughter hundreds of thousands of chickens.</p> <p>In Canada, a deadly strain of bird flu has already ravaged the poultry industry, resulting in almost 2 million chickens being killed. Now it has transferred not only to wild birds but mammals too. While the disease is usually confined to waterbirds, this particular strain has attacked crows, jays, gulls, raptors and even young foxes.</p> <p>The US is suffering what looks to become the worst ever outbreak of bird flu – which farmers are blaming on transmission from wild birds. More than 37 million chickens and turkeys have so far been culled, with more to come. If just one bird tests positive, the farmers must destroy the entire flock.</p>

As [one report noted](#): “In Wisconsin, lines of dump trucks have taken days to collect masses of bird carcasses and pile them in unused fields. Neighbours live with the stench of the decaying birds.” Even [the bald eagle](#), America’s national bird, has been affected.

Could it also affect humans? The answer is, in very rare cases, yes – usually those, [such as farmworkers](#), who have been in close and prolonged contact with infected domesticated birds. From 2003 to 2021, almost 500 people around the world died after catching the virus.

Clearly, bird flu is something we need to take seriously. But Stronach is concerned that the current monitoring and surveillance system is designed to protect commercial poultry firms, and is not really adequate for wild bird populations. “We need urgent research to find out what other species it is found in, and, crucially, the mechanisms by which it is spreading,” he says.

He is especially concerned that if dead birds are not collected after an outbreak, they may be scavenged by buzzards, red kites, gulls and skuas, thus spreading the disease even faster.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Coffee drinking link to lower risk of dying?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/01/well/eat/coffee-study-lower-dying-risk.html
GIST	<p>That morning cup of coffee may be linked to a lower risk of dying, researchers from a study published Monday in The Annals of Internal Medicine concluded. Those who drank 1.5 to 3.5 cups of coffee per day, even with a teaspoon of sugar, were up to 30 percent less likely to die during the study period than those who didn’t drink coffee. Those who drank unsweetened coffee were 16 to 21 percent less likely to die during the study period, with those drinking about three cups per day having the lowest risk of death when compared with noncoffee drinkers.</p> <p>Researchers analyzed coffee consumption data collected from the U.K. Biobank, a large medical database with health information from people across Britain. They analyzed demographic, lifestyle and dietary information collected from more than 170,000 people between the ages of 37 and 73 over a median follow-up period of seven years. The mortality risk remained lower for people who drank both decaffeinated and caffeinated coffee. The data was inconclusive for those who drank coffee with artificial sweeteners.</p> <p>“It’s huge. There are very few things that reduce your mortality by 30 percent,” said Dr. Christina Wee, an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and a deputy editor of the scientific journal where the study was published. Dr. Wee edited the study and published a corresponding editorial in the same journal.</p> <p>There are, however, major caveats to interpreting this research, she added. This is an observational study, which means the data cannot conclusively prove that coffee itself lowers the risk of dying; there may be other lifestyle factors contributing to that lower mortality risk among people who drink coffee, like a healthy diet or a consistent exercise routine.</p> <p>The average amount of added sugar per cup of sweetened coffee in the study was a little more than a teaspoon — far less than what is typically added to many sugary drinks at coffee chains across the country. A tall Caramel Macchiato at Starbucks, for instance, contains 25 grams of sugar, about five times more sugar than a sweetened cup of coffee from the study.</p> <p>“All bets are off when it comes to matching this with a latte, a Frappuccino, the super mocha whipped whatever,” said Dr. Eric Goldberg, a clinical associate professor of medicine at the N.Y.U. Grossman School of Medicine. These beverages tend to be high in calories and fat, he said, potentially negating or at least blunting any benefit from the coffee itself.</p>

This new study is the latest in a robust line of research showing coffee's potential health advantages, he said. [Previous research](#) has linked coffee consumption with a lower risk of Parkinson's disease, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, liver and prostate cancers and other health issues.

Scientists don't know exactly what makes coffee so beneficial, Dr. Goldberg said, but the answer may lie in its antioxidant properties, which can prevent or delay cell damage. Coffee beans contain high amounts of antioxidants, said Beth Czerwony, a registered dietitian at the Cleveland Clinic's Center for Human Nutrition in Ohio, which can help break down free radicals that cause damage to cells. Over time, a buildup of free radicals can increase inflammation in the body, which can cause plaque formation related to heart disease, she said, so dietitians recommend consuming foods and beverages that are rich in antioxidants.

There's also the possibility that coffee drinkers tend to make healthier choices in general. They might opt for a cold brew or a cup of drip coffee instead of a less healthy source of caffeine, like an energy drink or soda, Dr. Goldberg added. "If you're pounding Mountain Dew or Coca-Cola or Red Bull or all these other drinks, they have tons more sugar, all the artificial stuff — versus coffee, which is a generally unprocessed food."

Despite the encouraging evidence about coffee, there isn't enough data to suggest that people who don't currently drink coffee should add a stop to Starbucks during their morning routines, Dr. Wee said. And even avid coffee drinkers shouldn't use the study to justify endless cups of java. The study showed that the benefits of coffee tapered off for people who drank more than 4.5 cups of coffee each day. Past studies have shown that consuming "extreme amounts" — over seven cups per day — can take a toll, she said.

"Moderation is good," Dr. Goldberg said. "But too much of a good thing isn't necessarily more of a good thing."

[Return to Top](#)

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Leader Mexican drug cell in US jailed 16yrs
SOURCE	https://www.arcamax.com/currentnews/newsheadlines/s-2683054
GIST	<p>SAN DIEGO — Angel Dominguez Ramirez Jr.'s turn from a U.S. Marine to the leader of a Mexican drug trafficking cell can be traced back to the night of Nov. 29, 1994.</p> <p>That's when he swerved to avoid hitting a deer on a back road in North Carolina and flipped his car off a bridge into water. He was seriously injured, forcing a medical discharge from the Marines and ending his dream of joining a special operations unit. Even more devastating, his two daughters, ages 3 and 4, who were in the backseat, were killed.</p> <p>"He has never made an excuse for the direction he took, only to say that after the accident, he stopped caring. He was numb," his defense lawyer Nancee Schwartz wrote in a sentencing memorandum. "He didn't think or care about consequences because he had experienced the worst."</p> <p>On Tuesday, Dominguez, 50, was sentenced in San Diego federal court to more than 16 years in prison for what prosecutors characterized as his role as the "unquestioned leader" of El Seguimiento 39.</p> <p>The drug-trafficking organization, known as "El Seg 39" or simply "The Company," included a vast network of people to transport and supply drugs for sale in the United States, as well as launder money in a reverse pipeline back to Mexico, prosecutors said. The cell operated in alliance with several cartels, including the Beltrán Leyva Organization, Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación, the Sinaloa Cartel, Cártel Del Golfo and Los Zetas, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.</p>

"Wiretap evidence demonstrates that he controlled every aspect of his organization," Assistant U.S. Attorney Kyle Martin wrote in a sentencing memorandum. "Dominguez did rely on co-conspirators to negotiate and control drug routes, find sources of supply, and prevent law enforcement from thwarting his trafficking, but ultimately he gave the orders to each of these co-conspirators."

His allies included corrupt government officials in Mexico, including Ivan Reyes Arzate — a top federal police commander who served as a liaison with U.S. law enforcement officials. Reyes' cozy relationship with cartels was confirmed in an intercepted phone call between Dominguez and another trafficker — a conversation that was used as a key piece of evidence in Reyes' own U.S. prosecution. Reyes was sentenced in New York federal court in February to 10 years in prison for drug trafficking.

While cartel leaders typically use violence to exert control over their empires, Dominguez leveraged money and "his own gravitas" to achieve his aims, Martin said.

U.S. Homeland Security Investigations officials estimated the organization smuggled about 10 tons of cocaine into the United States each month and moved at least \$10 million of drug proceeds back into Mexico monthly — claims that Dominguez's attorney pointed out were "pure speculation from an unknown source," with no evidence produced to support it.

Dominguez is a dual U.S.-Mexican citizen — he was born in Guadalajara but settled in the border town of Roma, Texas, at age 8.

After the accident and end of his Marine career, he struggled to find work and deal with his trauma, his lawyer wrote.

When he was 27, he agreed to deliver a load of marijuana after it was crossed from Mexico and was arrested in Texas. He pleaded guilty and served 13 months in federal custody.

He and his brother-in-law later started a small construction company, but that went under with the crash of the housing market. He moved his family to Mexico in 2007 to work with an architect cousin. While there, he met people involved in marijuana and cocaine smuggling, and he saw the illicit work as a way to financially support his family, his lawyer said.

As part of the investigation, law enforcement in the U.S. and other countries seized more than 4,300 kilograms of cocaine in Mexico, Costa Rica, Texas and Chicago, as well as more than \$7 million, prosecutors said.

Dominguez was arrested in Mexico in connection to the U.S. investigation in 2016 and extradited to San Diego.

He pleaded guilty in November to an international drug-distribution conspiracy and a money-laundering conspiracy. He will get credit for the nearly six years he has already served in custody.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/02 Arrest: 16yr-old in mass shooting plot
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/02/us/california-berkeley-teen-arrest-school-shooting-plot/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A 16-year-old boy was arrested this week after police learned he was allegedly recruiting students to carry out a mass shooting at a high school in Berkeley, California, authorities said Wednesday.</p> <p>Police received a tip on May 21 of the teen's alleged plot targeting Berkeley High School, which also included a possible bombing, and obtained a search warrant for his home, Berkeley Police said in a statement.</p> <p>The search turned up parts to explosives and assault rifles as well as several knives and electronic items that could be used to create weapons, police said.</p>

Authorities also prepared a mental health response through the city's Mobile Crisis Team to evaluate the teen.

He turned himself in Monday, police said, and was arrested on suspicion of possessing destructive device materials and threatening to commit a crime which will result in death or great bodily injury.

The Alameda County District Attorney's Office declined to comment because the person arrested is a juvenile.

The discovery of the reported mass shooting plot comes as the US grapples with a series of mass shootings that have left communities across the country grieving.

Last week, an 18-year-old [opened fire at an elementary school](#) in Uvalde, Texas, killing 19 children and two teachers.

Less than three weeks ago, 10 people were killed in a racially motivated shooting at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York.

And Wednesday, at least four people were killed and several were hurt in a [shooting at a medical facility](#) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, police said, in what became America's 233rd mass shooting this year, according to the [Gun Violence Archive](#). CNN and the archive define a mass shooting as one in which at least four people are shot, excluding the shooter.

In a [letter](#) to the school community, Berkeley Unified School District Superintendent Brent Stephens thanked those who came forward to report the alleged threat.

"Speaking up in this instance allowed for the police to intervene in advance of any harm occurring," Stephens wrote.

He said the school had been in contact with the police department since the onset of the investigation, which is ongoing.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Uvalde SD police chief speaks publicly
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/01/us/uvalde-shooting-police-chief-pete-arredondo/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Pedro "Pete" Arredondo, the embattled Uvalde school police chief who led the flawed law enforcement response to last week's school shooting and has remained out of the public eye since, spoke exclusively to CNN on Wednesday and declined to answer substantive questions about the massacre.</p> <p>According to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), Arredondo has not responded to a request for a follow-up interview with the Texas Rangers, who are investigating the shooting at Robb Elementary.</p> <p>Yet outside his home Wednesday, Arredondo told CNN's Aaron Cooper, "I am in contact with DPS everyday."</p> <p>And outside his office minutes later, he told CNN's Shimon Prokupecz that he's not going to release any further information while funerals are ongoing.</p> <p>"We're going to be respectful to the family," he said. "We're going to do that eventually. Whenever this is done and the families quit grieving, then we'll do that obviously."</p> <p>It's the first time Arredondo has commented since two brief press statements on the day of the attack, in which he said the gunman was dead but provided little information on the shooting, citing the ongoing investigation. He took no questions at the time and has not appeared in a public forum since.</p>

Nineteen children and two teachers were killed in the attack last Tuesday, and officials have so far failed to answer [major questions about why police](#) took about 80 minutes to breach two locked classroom doors and confront the gunman.

The school police chief was identified last week by DPS as the commanding officer who decided not to force their way into the rooms and instead to stand back and wait for reinforcements -- even as children inside repeatedly called 911 and begged police for help.

A Customs and Border Protection tactical team ultimately entered the rooms using a janitor's keys and fatally shot the suspect, DPS said.

DPS Director Steven McCraw did not identify Arredondo by name, but he said the chief made the "wrong decision" not to engage with the gunman sooner. He said the commanding officer decided to treat the situation like a barricaded suspect rather than an active shooter.

Established law enforcement policy, created in the wake of the Columbine school shooting of 1999, [calls for police to stop the gunman as fast as possible](#) in an active shooter situation.

Arredondo has worked in law enforcement for nearly 30 years and became chief of police of the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District (CISD) Police Department in March 2020.

In that role, he completed a school-based law enforcement active shooter training course in December 2021, according to his professional training file obtained by CNN. He also completed a school-based law enforcement active shooter training course with the Johnson County Sheriff's Office in August 2020.

Further, he completed an Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) program Terrorism Response Tactics course in June 2019, according to the document. The ALERRT program is designed to teach officers techniques to save lives after an active shooting, such as how to apply tourniquets, according to the [National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center](#).

Arredondo sworn in to city council in secret ceremony

Arredondo was elected to the Uvalde city council earlier this month, and a special city council meeting to swear him and others in had been set to take place Tuesday.

However, Mayor Don McLaughlin said in a statement Monday that the meeting "will not take place as scheduled," adding "our focus on Tuesday is on our families who lost loved ones."

Instead, Arredondo was sworn in privately without advance notice to the media. Although there was no formal ceremony, McLaughlin said that members of the council came to City Hall "at their convenience" during the day to be sworn in, adding that Arredondo appeared in person to receive the oath and sign paperwork.

"Out of respect for the families who buried their children today, and who are planning to bury their children in the next few days, no ceremony was held," McLaughlin said in a written statement.

In his Monday statement, the mayor said Arredondo was "duly elected" and that there is "nothing in the City Charter, Election Code, or Texas Constitution that prohibits him from taking the oath of office. To our knowledge, we are currently not aware of any investigation of Mr. Arredondo."

In his short comments Wednesday, Arredondo said the swearing-in was "a private thing" out of respect for the families, saying the families are the focus right now.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Cali cartel boss dies in US prison
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/01/cali-cartel-gilberto-rodriguez-orejuela-dies-us-prison

GIST	<p>Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, an elderly leader of the Cali cartel – and bitter rival of Pablo Escobar – has died in a US prison, his lawyer said on Wednesday.</p> <p>Sometimes known by his alias ‘The Chessplayer,’ Rodríguez Orejuela, 83, helped lead the Cali cartel, which once controlled 80% of the global cocaine market, according to a report from the US Drug Enforcement Administration.</p> <p>“The children and wife of Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela regretfully inform that yesterday, Tuesday, May 31 2022, at 6.54 pm, our father and husband died of a lymphoma,” the family said in a statement shared by Rodríguez’s daughter Alexandra.</p> <p>The family planned to repatriate his remains to Colombia, the statement said.</p> <p>Rodríguez Orejuela’s arrest by Colombian authorities in 1995 marked the beginning of the disintegration of the Cali cartel, which had smuggled vast amounts of cocaine from Colombia to the United States in the 1980s and 1990s.</p> <p>He was extradited to the United States in 2004, and was serving his sentence at a federal prison in Butner, North Carolina.</p> <p>In 2020, a judge denied him early release on compassionate grounds. His attorney, David O Markus, had said at the time that the former drug kingpin was suffering a range of health problems.</p> <p>“We were very sad to learn about his passing last night,” Markus said. “Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this time.”</p> <p>Rodríguez Orejuela and his brother, Miguel, built a huge criminal enterprise that fought with Pablo Escobar and his allies in the Medellín cartel for control of Colombia’s drug trade.</p> <p>Unlike Escobar, who launched an all-out war on Colombian authorities and security forces, the Cali cartel concentrated most of their violence on rival crime operations.</p> <p>They also confessed to financing political campaigns, including the 1994 run of Liberal Party president Ernesto Samper, who has denied having any knowledge of the donations at the time.</p> <p>The Rodríguez Orejuela brothers were captured in 1995 and sentenced to 15 years in prison. At that point, Colombian law prohibited the extradition of its nationals, but under pressure from the US, Colombia lifted that ban in 1997.</p> <p>However, in 2002, Rodríguez Orejuela was unexpectedly released from prison after a controversial court ruling upholding a judge’s decision to release him after just seven years in return for good behaviour and participating in work-study programmes. He was rearrested in 2003.</p> <p>The brothers were found to have been continuing to traffic from prison and criminal charges were filed in Miami and New York. In 2004, Gilberto was extradited; Miguel was extradited the next year.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/02 Report: Rwanda threatens exiles in US
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/02/rwanda-exiles-stalking-harassing-threatening-us-freedom-house-report-edited-
GIST	Rwanda has been accused of being among the worst perpetrators of “transnational repression” in the US, stalking, harassing and threatening exiles there, according to a new report.

[The report by the Freedom House](#) advocacy group in Washington, names Rwanda alongside China, Russia, Iran and Egypt as the principal offenders in seeking to extend the reach of their repressive regimes into the US.

Isabel Linzer, one of the report's authors, said the findings raise further questions about the UK government's agreement with Kigali to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda. The [first deportation flight](#) is due on 14 June.

"People often focus on Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, Russia, but [Rwanda](#) is one of the most prolific perpetrators of transnational repression in the world," Linzer said. "And it certainly has not received the same level of scrutiny as some of those other countries."

"The asylum deal between the UK and Rwanda is quite shocking given how frequently the Rwandan government has gone after Rwandans in the UK and the British government is well aware of that," she added.

The Freedom House report, [Unsafe in America: Transnational Repression in the United States](#), notes that attacks on exiles have taken place since the cold war, but adds "operations by foreign intelligence agents have significantly intensified in recent years".

"Autocrats cast a long shadow onto America's soil," it says. "The governments of Iran, China, Egypt, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, and other states are increasingly and more aggressively disregarding US laws to threaten, harass, surveil, stalk, and even plot to physically harm people across the country."

One of those targeted was Paul Rusesabagina, the former Kigali hotel manager whose efforts to save people in the 1994 genocide is told the film Hotel Rwanda.

Rusesabagina, a US permanent resident and prominent dissident, was abducted while travelling in the Middle East in August 2020, tricked into boarding a private airplane that took him to Rwanda, where he was [sentenced to 25 years in prison](#). Last month the US state department formally declared him to be "wrongfully detained".

Rusesabagina's daughter, Carine, and other Rwandan dissidents have been found to have been the [targets of surveillance](#) using Pegasus spyware made by the Israel security firm NSO Group.

The Rwandan government has denied using the spyware but did not respond to a request to comment on the Freedom House report.

Rwandan opposition figures in the US speak of constant surveillance, harassment and threats.

"You come to understand that it is part of your life," said Theogene Rudasingwa, a former chief of staff to President Paul Kagame who was once Rwanda's ambassador to the US, and is now a staunch critic of Kagame's rule. "My wife is constantly in fear. My children are constantly in fear, especially for me. Every time I step out of the house, they are on edge. I have determined that I can't be paralysed and live in fear 24/7, but the feeling of being a hunted person is around me 24/7," Rudasingwa told the Guardian.

Three months ago he said he came out of his local bank to be told by a passerby that they had seen someone go under his car. Rudasingwa called the police who carried out a three-hour search but found nothing, possibly because the intruder had been disturbed.

Rudasingwa was the target of an assassination plot in Belgium in 2015, which failed when he put off a planned trip there. Following the murder of his fellow opposition leader, former Rwandan intelligence chief Patrick Karegeya, in South Africa in 2013 – [a killing widely believed to have been ordered in Kigali](#) – the state department advised Rudasingwa to take extra precautions.

“They told me that they had reached out to Kigali to warn them not to try to do that kind of thing here in the United States,” he told the Guardian.

In March this year, the FBI launched a [website on transnational repression](#) giving advice on how to report incidents, part of a broad campaign by the administration to confront the growing threat.

“Transnational repression is used not only to harm or threaten individual dissidents, journalists, activists, and diaspora members, but to silence entire communities,” a spokesperson for the National Security Council said.

“Our intention is to use the full suite of tools and resources at our disposal to protect and build support for individuals and communities who are being targeted, and to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.”

However, Claude Gatebuke, another Rwandan activist who has received repeated anonymous threats, said many in the diaspora do not report harassment because of the close diplomatic ties between Washington and Kigali.

“Part of the reason why people won’t speak up is because they know the government of Rwanda has a very tight relationship with the US government, and sharing information, they think they’re telling on themselves,” Gatebuke told the Freedom House authors.

Senior members of Congress have also voiced unease at Washington’s embrace of Kagame. After the head of US [Africa](#) Command, Gen Stephen Townsend, posted pictures of him posing alongside the Rwandan president, the top Republican on the Senate foreign relations committee, James Risch, warned that the bilateral relationship “faces serious complications”.

“Portraying the opposite is counterproductive and undermines [state department] messages on other top diplomatic concerns,” Risch [wrote on Twitter](#).

“I’m always sensitive to the fact that there is that level of interaction at the intelligence level, at the level of the FBI, of senior officials always going to Kigali like it’s their Mecca,” Rudasingwa said. “How could I possibly say I’m safe, sharing sensitive information with them? So sometimes you just keep it to yourself.

“Nobody ever calls Kagame out. Nobody seeks accountability from him,” he added. “They give these occasional slaps on the wrist, but then you see the United Kingdom is sending refugees there. So where would you get the guts to call him out when he is doing you a favour?”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/02 Disturbing new pattern: young assailants
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/02/us/politics/mass-shootings-young-men-guns.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The two young men accused of carrying out the massacres in Buffalo and Uvalde followed a familiar path: They legally bought semiautomatic rifles right after turning 18, posted images intended to display their strength and menace — and then turned those weapons on innocent people.</p> <p>As investigators and researchers determine how the tragedies unfolded, the age of the accused has emerged as a key factor in understanding how two teenagers became driven to acquire such deadly firepower and how it led them to mass shootings.</p> <p>They fit in a critical age range — roughly 15 to 25 — that law enforcement officials, researchers and policy experts consider a hazardous crossroads for young men, a period when they are in the throes of developmental changes and societal pressures that can turn them toward violence in general, and, in the rarest cases, mass shootings.</p>

Six of the nine deadliest mass shootings in the United States since 2018 were by people who were 21 or younger, representing a shift for mass casualty shootings, which before 2000 were most often initiated by men in their mid-20s, 30s and 40s.

“We see two clusters when it comes to mass shooters, people in their 40s who commit workplace type shootings, and a very big cluster of young people — 18, 19, 20, 21 — who seem to get caught up in the social contagion of killing,” said Jillian Peterson, a criminal justice professor who helped found [the Violence Project](#), which maintains a comprehensive national database of mass shootings.

There is no single, easy explanation for why young men are more likely to engage in mass shootings. (Girls and women make up a small percentage of all perpetrators.) But many of the causes cited most often by law enforcement officials and academics seem intuitive — online bullying, the increasingly aggressive marketing of guns to boys, lax state gun laws and federal statutes that make it legal to buy a semiautomatic “long gun” at 18.

The shootings come against a backdrop of [a worsening adolescent mental health crisis](#), one that predated the pandemic but has been intensified by it. Much of the despair among teenagers and young adults has been inwardly directed, with [soaring rates](#) of self-harm and suicide. In that sense, the perpetrators of mass shootings represent an extreme minority of young people, but one that nonetheless exemplifies broader trends of loneliness, hopelessness and the darker side of a culture saturated by social media and violent content.

In addition to [Buffalo](#) and [Uvalde, Texas](#), there was a mass shooting at supermarket in Boulder, Colo., in March 2021 that the police said was carried out by a 21-year-old man; a massacre by what authorities said was a 21-year-old gunman targeting Hispanic shoppers at a Walmart in El Paso in August 2019 that resulted in 23 deaths; a school shooting in Santa Fe, Texas, in which a 17-year-old student is accused of killing eight students and two teachers in May 2018; and the killing of 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., in February 2018 by a 19-year-old former student.

Only two of the 30 deadliest mass shootings recorded from 1949 to 2017 involved gunmen younger than 21: The first was the massacre of 13 people by two teenagers at Columbine High School in 1999, and the second came when a 20-year-old killed 27 people, most of them children, at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., in 2012.

A shooting on Wednesday in Tulsa, Okla., in which a gunman killed four people and wounded several more before apparently taking his own life, defied the recent pattern. The police said they believed that the gunman, whom they had not identified, was between 35 and 40 years old.

Frank T. McAndrew, a Knox College psychology professor who studies mass shootings, said almost all of the young killers he has researched were motivated by a need to prove themselves.

“These are young guys who feel like losers, and they have an overwhelming drive to show everybody they are not on the bottom,” he said. “In the case of the Buffalo shooter, it was about trying to impress this community of racists he had cultivated online. In the case of the kid in Uvalde, it was about going back to the place where you felt disrespected and acting out violently.”

Ms. Peterson added: “And since Columbine, they have tended to study and emulate each other. It’s a growing problem.”

In almost every case, social media or interactive online game platforms played some role, mirroring the ubiquity of online youth culture over the past two decades.

In the late 1990s, at the dawn of the social media age, one of the gunmen at Columbine created a blog on AOL to detail his violent thoughts.

The 22-year-old college student who murdered six people in Santa Barbara, Calif., in 2014 offered one of the most direct expressions of a gunman's mentality in a video posted on YouTube: The gun, he said, gave him a sense of power.

The Buffalo gunman, emulating the 28-year-old anti-Muslim terrorist who massacred 51 people in Christchurch, New Zealand, three years ago, live streamed himself as he methodically killed shoppers because they were Black. The man charged with the killings in Uvalde used Yubo, a relatively new platform, to share menacing messages in which he seemed to telegraph his plans.

"It's a way for kids to flex," said Titania Jordan, with Bark Technologies, an online safety company that monitors the use of platforms for violent content. "It's a way for them to show strength if they are bullied, or left out. It's just a part of the narrative now in all these cases — there's always a social media component."

There is also a biological one. Scientists have long known the teenage and post-teenage period is a critical time for brain development and a time, for most teenage boys, often characterized by aggressive and impulsive behavior. Girls of the same age, by contrast, have greater control over their impulses and emotions.

Overall, boys and young men account for half of all homicides involving guns, or any other weapon, nationwide, a percentage that has been steadily rising. Exactly 50 percent of all killings in 2020, the last year comprehensive data is available, were committed by assailants under 30, [according to the F.B.I.'s uniform crime data tracking system](#).

Mass shootings, defined by most experts as involving the deaths of more than four people, are rare; shootings on the scale of Buffalo and Uvalde, with more than 10 victims, are even less common. [Around 99 percent](#) of all shootings in the country involve fewer victims, are the result of crime or personal disputes, and are motivated drug activity, gang conflict, domestic violence and personal disputes, according to statistics compiled by the federal government and academic.

"Why are a disproportionate number of crimes committed by males in their late teens and early 20s?" asked Laurence Steinberg, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Temple University who has worked extensively on issues involving adolescent brain development.

The explanation, he said, includes the increasingly well-understood neurobiology of the teenage years. During adolescence, a "huge mismatch" develops between parts of the brain that cause impulsive behavior and emotional sensitivity and other parts of the brain that regulate acting out on such impulses, Dr. Steinberg said. Men, he added, tend typically to have an even higher, faster peak in arousal, while women see a higher peak in regulation at an earlier age — and therefore "at every age, males are more sensation-seeking."

The height of that mismatch tends to be in the late teens or early 20s. "Then the regulatory systems start to catch up to the impulses, and you've got this gradual improvement in ability to control thoughts, emotions and behaviors ongoing into the early 20s," Dr. Steinberg added.

The changes in brain development are accompanied by the disorienting societal passage from boy to man, with all the turbulence that entails even in healthy boys. There are "major differences in socialization for males and females related to aggressive behavior, appropriate ways to seek support, how to display emotions and acceptability of firearm use," said Sara Johnson, a professor of pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Young men are "almost universally" in transition "in their relationships, living situations, lifestyles, education, occupation," while "at the same time they have substantial autonomy from the adults in their lives and may find themselves negotiating with little support or supervision," Dr. Johnson said.

Yet what differentiates mass killers from other young men who do not act on these impulses is hard to define, and even harder to counter: madness.

Still, the vast majority of young men with mental health disorders, even serious ones, never commit acts of violence. They are more likely to be victims, or impulsively hurt themselves, than to painstakingly plot violence against others.

Republicans, countering Democratic calls for tightened gun controls, have seized on improving school safety and upgrading mental health services after the recent massacres.

Conservatives are also resisting efforts by congressional Democrats to raise the legal age to buy a semiautomatic rifle from 18 to 21. A Republican-appointed federal judge recently struck down California's attempt to increase the age. The state enlisted Dr. Steinberg and other experts to make the scientific case for keeping such weapons out of the hands of teenagers.

Their arguments did not prevail. "America would not exist without the heroism of the young adults who fought and died in our revolutionary army," Judge Ryan Nelson, speaking for [a two-to-one majority](#) in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, wrote in an opinion released on May 11, three days before the rampage in Buffalo.

With few policy safeguards, mental health professionals and local authorities have been left to spot and stop potential gunmen, with uneven success.

In 2018, the police [arrested two boys](#), 13 and 14, after receiving a tip just before the anniversary of the Columbine shooting. The teenagers were planning to target a school in Uvalde and wanted to rob a neighbor's house to obtain weapons. The suspect in the Uvalde massacre was not involved in that plot.

Over the years, Jill H. Rathus, a therapist in Great Neck, N.Y., has seen her share of young men who seemed to be a danger to themselves or others, including one whose mother feared her son would become a gunman. He did not.

Dr. Rathus and other experts cautioned that there were vast differences between suicidal and homicidal behavior, but she also said she saw some overlap in certain feelings that contributed to growing acts of violence directed at self and at others. "There's an incredible sense of aching despair plus hopelessness, and then there's a sense of a lack of meaningful connections," Dr. Rathus said. "Then there's access to lethal means, that's the center."

In 2006, Dr. McAndrew, the Knox College psychology professor, and two of his colleagues [set out to test](#) the effect of guns on the behavior of young men, monitoring the testosterone levels, and signs of aggression, in 30 male college students when they were given a children's toy and an actual firearm.

"The presence of a gun changed their behavior significantly," he said. "Just holding a gun gave you guts."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Spokane police arrest boy for threats to kill
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/juvenile-arrested-threats-against-spokane-school/293-a9e008c8-8411-411e-8381-ed69ec77885
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — The Spokane Police Department (SPD) arrested a juvenile boy on Wednesday following an investigation into threats against a local middle school.</p> <p>SPD said the boy was arrested for Felony Harassment (Threats to Kill) following an investigation into a threat against Glover Middle School.</p> <p>SPD Major Crimes Unit, patrol officers, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other investigative units conducted the initial investigation that led to the arrest, according to a press release.</p>

	The arrest happened at approximately noon on Wednesday.
	SPD said the investigation into the threats is ongoing and no other information is available at this time.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	06/02 Nightclub needle attacks puzzle Europe
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/nightclub-needle-attacks-puzzle-european-authorities/
GIST	<p>PARIS (AP) — Across France, more than 300 people have reported being pricked out of the blue with needles at nightclubs or concerts in recent months. Doctors and multiple prosecutors are on the case, but no one knows who's doing it or why, and whether the victims have been injected with drugs — or indeed any substance at all.</p> <p>Club owners and police are trying to raise awareness, and a rapper even interrupted his recent show to warn concert-goers about the risk of surprise needle attacks.</p> <p>It's not just France: Britain's government is studying a spate of "needle spiking" there, and police in Belgium and the Netherlands are investigating scattered cases too.</p> <p>On May 4, 18-year-old Tomas Laux attended a rap concert in Lille in northern France, where he smoked a bit of marijuana and drank some alcohol during the show. When he came home, he told The Associated Press, he was feeling dizzy and had a headache — and he spotted a strange little skin puncture on his arm and a bruise.</p> <p>The next morning, the symptoms didn't disappear and Laux went to his doctor, who advised him to go to the emergency room. Medics confirmed evidence of a needle prick, and Laux was tested for HIV and hepatitis. His results came out negative, like other victims' so far.</p> <p>"I've given up going to concerts since it happened," Laux said.</p> <p>Hundreds of kilometers (miles) away, Leanne Desnos recounted a similar experience after going to a club in the southwest city of Bordeaux in April. Desnos, also 18, passed out the next day, and felt dizzy and had hot flashes while at a fast food restaurant. When she got home, she realized she had an injection mark on her arm. After having seen testimony on social media about the mystery pricks, she went to a clinic to get tested for infections. She is still awaiting results.</p> <p>People from Paris, Toulouse, Nantes, Nancy, Rennes, and other cities around France have reported being pricked with a needle without their knowledge or permission. The targeted individuals, who are mostly women, show visible marks of injection, often bruises, and report symptoms like feeling groggy.</p> <p>France's national police agency says 302 people have filed formal complaints about such needle pricks. Several police investigations are ongoing in different regions, but no suspect has been arrested yet, no needle has been found and the motive remains unclear.</p> <p>No victims have reported sexual assault; one said he was robbed, in Grenoble in April, according to Le Monde newspaper.</p> <p>Two people tested positive for GHB, and they might have ingested the drug in a drink, according to an official with the national police agency. GHB, a powerful anesthetic used by predators seeking to sexually abuse or assault victims, can be detected in the urine only for 12 hours, the police official said.</p> <p>The official and a doctor who is taking a leading role in dealing with the phenomenon expressed doubt that the nightclub pricks contained GHB, noting that to penetrate via needle, the drug needs to be injected for several seconds, which most victims would notice.</p>

“We didn’t find any drugs or substances or objective proof which attest to ... administration of a substance with wrongful or criminal intent. What we fear the most is people contracting HIV, hepatitis or any infectious disease” from the jabs, said Dr. Emmanuel Puskarczyk, head of the poison control center of the eastern French city of Nancy.

In the Nancy hospital, a special procedure has been created to optimize care of victims. Patients who show symptoms like grogginess are treated, and blood and urine samples are kept for five days in case any want to press charges.

“Each case is different. We see injection marks, but some people don’t have symptoms. When potential victims have symptoms like discomfort or black holes (in their memory), they are not specific,” Puskarczyk said.

The police official, who was not authorized to be publicly named according to national police policy, said: “At this stage, we can’t talk about a specific modus operandi. There aren’t any similarities between the cases. The only thing similar is that people are being injected with a needle in a festive context in different places in France.”

With club-goers expressing fear on social networks and media coverage fueling anxiety, the French Interior Ministry launched a national awareness campaign this month. Police are handing out leaflets to clubbers and discussing prevention measures with club owners.

In the U.K., Parliament issued a report in April on drink and needle spiking in pubs and nightclubs after a sudden surge in such incidents last year. It said police reported about 1,000 cases of needle injection across the country around October 2021, when droves of students returned to campuses after coronavirus restrictions eased.

However, the parliament report said there was a lack of data to judge how serious the issue is. It’s not clear whether anyone has been prosecuted for needle spiking, or how many victims were injected with a drug or other substance.

“No-one knows how prevalent spiking is, whether by drink, drug or needle, and no-one knows what causes perpetrators to do it. Anecdotal evidence suggests the practice is widespread and dangerous,” it said.

A series of similar incidents involving people pricked with needles at nightclubs, a soccer game and during the Belgian Pride parade have been reported in neighboring Belgium. Last month, the Brussels prosecutor’s office opened two investigations following complaints from women who said they were jabbed during the pride parade in downtown Brussels. Organizers of the march said in a statement they were informed of several cases and urged potential victims to get checked at hospitals.

Back in France, as investigations continue with no perpetrators found, rapper Dinos interrupted his concert in Strasbourg this week to warn his fans about the risks, and insisted: “This has to stop.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Hinckley, shot Reagan, to get full freedom
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/hinckley-nears-full-freedom-41-years-after-shooting-reagan/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — John Hinckley Jr., who shot President Ronald Reagan in 1981, is “no longer a danger to himself or others” and will be freed from court oversight this month as planned, a federal judge said Wednesday, capping Hinckley’s four-decade journey through the legal and mental health systems.</p> <p>U.S. District Court Judge Paul L. Friedman had freed Hinckley in September from all remaining restrictions but said his order wouldn’t take effect until June 15. Wednesday’s final hearing was scheduled to ensure Hinckley was continuing to do well in the community in Virginia where he has lived for years.</p>

Hinckley did not attend the final hearing, and the judge made no changes to his plans to give Hinckley full freedom from court oversight.

“He’s been scrutinized. He’s passed every test. He’s no longer a danger to himself or others,” Friedman said at a hearing that lasted about an hour. Friedman devoted much of the hearing to talking about the “long road” of the case, which he was randomly assigned two decades ago, the third judge to be involved in the case.

He noted that Hinckley, who turned 67 on Sunday, was profoundly troubled when tried to kill the president, coming “very close to doing so.” But Hinckley has shown no signs of active mental illness since the mid-1980s, the judge repeated Wednesday, and has exhibited no violent behavior or interest in weapons.

“I am confident that Mr. Hinckley will do well in the years remaining to him,” the judge said. He noted that lawyers for the government and Hinckley have fought for years over whether Hinckley should be given increasing amounts of freedom. “It took us a long time to get here,” he said, adding there is now unanimous agreement: “This is the time to let John Hinckley move on with his life, so we will.”

Hinckley was confined to a mental hospital in Washington for more than two decades after a jury found him not guilty by reason of insanity in shooting Reagan. The shooting was fueled by his obsession with the movie “Taxi Driver” and its star, Jodie Foster. In the movie, the main character at one point attempts to kill a presidential candidate.

Starting in 2003 Friedman began allowing Hinckley to spend longer and longer stretches in the community with requirements like attending therapy and restrictions on where he can travel. He’s been living full-time in Virginia since 2016, though still under restrictions.

Some of those include: allowing officials access to his electronic devices, email and online accounts; being barred from traveling to places where he knows there will be someone protected by the Secret Service; and giving three days’ notice if he wants to travel more than 75 miles (120 kilometers) from his home in Virginia.

Prosecutors had previously opposed ending restrictions, but they changed their position last year. Prosecutor Kacie Weston said in court Wednesday that the government believes the case “has demonstrated the success that can come from a wraparound mental health system.” She noted Hinckley has expressed a desire to continue receiving mental health services even after he is no longer required to do so, and said the government wishes “him success for both his sake as well as the safety of the community.”

Hinckley’s longtime lawyer, Barry Levine, said the case had “started with a troubled young man who inflicted great harm” and but that, in the end, “I think we have salvaged a life.”

“John worked hard. He wanted to correct something that he was unable to erase, and this is the best outcome that one could imagine,” Levine said after the hearing, adding, “His regrets will always be with him with respect to the families of those he injured.”

Levine said his client hopes to pursue a career in music and has “real talent.” In July, Hinckley — who plays guitar and sings and has shared his music on a YouTube channel — plans to give a concert in Brooklyn, New York. Appearances in Connecticut and Chicago for what he has called the “John Hinckley Redemption Tour” have been canceled.

Reagan recovered from the March 30, 1981, shooting, but his press secretary, James Brady, who died in 2014, was partially paralyzed as a result. Secret Service agent Timothy McCarthy and Washington police officer Thomas Delahanty were also wounded. Reagan died in 2004.

On Wednesday, Reagan’s foundation issued a statement opposing the lifting of restrictions.

	<p>“The Reagan Foundation and Institute is both saddened and concerned that John Hinckley Jr. will soon be unconditionally released and intends to pursue a music career for profit,” the statement read. It concluded, “We strongly oppose his release into society where he apparently seeks to make a profit from his infamy.”</p> <p>In the 2000s, Hinckley began, with the judge’s approval, making visits to his parents’ home in Williamsburg, Virginia. His father died in 2008, but in 2016 he was given permission to live with his mother full-time. Still, he was required to attend individual and group therapy sessions, was barred from talking to the media and could only travel within a limited area. Secret Service would also periodically follow him.</p> <p>Hinckley’s mother died in 2021. He has since moved out of her home. In recent years, Hinckley has made money by selling items at an antique mall and by selling books online.</p> <p>Hinckley has said on his YouTube channel that he has started a record label, Emporia Records, and that his first release will be a 14-song CD of his music. He also promotes his music on Twitter.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Police fatally shoot murder suspect in Kent
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/murder-suspect-fatally-shot-by-officers-from-3-agencies-in-kent/
GIST	<p>Law enforcement officials from three agencies shot and killed a man suspected of murder Wednesday afternoon in Kent while trying to make an arrest, according to the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>Members of the Pacific Northwest Violent Offenders Task Force were in the 3500 block of South 222nd Place to arrest the suspect on a warrant around 5:45 p.m., according to an SPD blotter item. SPD did not provide information on the suspect’s identity or the crime for which he was being sought.</p> <p>A detective from SPD, a Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office detective and a deputy U.S. Marshal fired their weapons fatally striking the suspect, according to Seattle police.</p> <p>The task force is led by the U.S. Marshals Service and comprised of 27 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies including SPD.</p> <p>The task force members Wednesday knocked and identified themselves as law enforcement officials, according to the initial report. The suspect opened the door and “charged” at officers while holding a knife, according to Seattle police.</p> <p>Law enforcement and Kent Fire Department medics gave medical aid, but the man died at the scene, according to Seattle police.</p> <p>The SPD detective will be placed on administrative leave during the investigation. It was not immediately known if the others involved in the shooting will be placed on administrative leave.</p> <p>Representatives of the Office of Police Accountability and the Office of Inspector General were at the scene. SPD’s Force Investigation Team will investigate the incident.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Uvalde: role of doors in security plans
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/texas-attack-shows-role-doors-school-security-plans-85122047
GIST	Doors – both the one the gunman entered and the one police did not open for over an hour – have been at the center of the investigation into the killing of 19 students and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas, and the police response to the massacre.

School officials under pressure to balance accessibility and safety confront a variety of decisions about the seemingly mundane act of going in and out of a building or classroom. But as the attack on Robb Elementary School showed, such choices can sometimes spell the difference between life and death.

State police initially said the gunman entered through an exterior door that had been propped open by a teacher. But a spokesman for the Texas Department of Public Safety said Tuesday that the teacher closed the door after realizing a shooter was on campus, but it did not lock as it should have.

Inside the school, officers waited for more than an hour to breach the classroom, and state authorities have blamed the head of the school district's small police department for wrongly believing children were no longer at risk. Officials said a U.S. Border Patrol tactical team used a janitor's key to unlock the classroom door and kill the gunman.

State and federal panels charged with reviewing individual mass shootings have repeatedly advised limiting access to school buildings by locking exterior doors, forcing visitors to enter through a secure door and requiring teachers to lock classrooms while classes are in session.

The U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency tells districts that they may be able to delay an intruder by keeping exterior doors locked when they are not being monitored by staff. But schools will still need to ensure that employees "adhere to policies mandating that all exterior doors remain closed outside of student arrival and dismissal times."

In its latest guidance, updated in February, the agency also wrote that districts should consider whether measures such as automatic locks on classroom doors could hinder emergency responders.

"If a school installs automatic locks on classroom doors, they should provide emergency responders with a means of accessing all locked down areas; the office might therefore place master keys or key fobs in a safe but easily accessible location, or provide local authorities with a copy of these devices when first installing any new lock systems."

But there are no federal standards or requirements on these points, leaving the decision up to state or local authorities. Those officials must also balance how to keep people safe in case of a fire or natural disaster and the expense of renovating and maintaining schools.

Each killing at a U.S. school increases pressure on school authorities to act, nudged on by security companies claiming new products will "harden" schools and prevent the next tragedy.

"I've had people suggest bulletproof glass everywhere or gunshot-detection systems, and it's like 'How far do you go?'" said Ronald Stephens, director of the National School Safety Center. "Would you rather have your resources invested in a great teacher or a school that looks like Fort Knox?"

After the 2018 shooting that left 10 dead at Santa Fe High School outside Houston, Texas lawmakers approved \$100 million for school campus "hardening" projects.

According to a governor's school safety report in 2019, that money could be used on older buildings for metal detectors, vehicle barriers, alarm systems, security fences, bullet-resistant glass, door-locking systems and other measures.

A state-run survey taken during the 2015 school year reported that 96.1% of administrators reported locking campus doors to limit access to the school. Almost 88% of districts used cameras and 79% had a sign-in process for visitors.

It's not clear if Uvalde schools sought or received any of that money before last week's shooting. A Uvalde school district spokesperson declined to answer emailed questions about school security.

It's also unclear why it took so long for police to retrieve a key from a school official that allowed a U.S. Border Patrol tactical team to finally get inside the classroom.

Stephens said ensuring that law enforcement can get into locked classrooms is a crucial part of a school safety plan. He encourages schools to designate that responsibility to multiple people.

Security experts warn that physical barriers can only do so much. Human error, faulty equipment or an attacker's determination can overcome security measures.

Locked doors certainly aren't insurmountable. The gunman who killed 20 children and six adults in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, shot out a window next to the school's locked entrance doors and opened fire again once he entered.

Most research backs a more comprehensive approach focused on training educators to spot warning signs in at-risk kids paired with a rigorous safety plan, training for all staff and partnership with law enforcement and other community groups.

Chuck Wilson is the co-founder of the Partner Alliance for Safer Schools, a collection of security-focused companies and other school-safety advocates that developed their own set of guidelines for schools. They recommend schools "at a minimum" lock exterior doors while classrooms are in session and lock classroom doors too.

"It's a lot less convenient, but it's a lot safer in today's world," Wilson said. People who are intent on harming others, "they are creative. They have a lot of time to think, to watch, to observe the ingress and egress, the class changes, before school and after school activities."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 Mass shooting Tulsa medical bldg.; 4 killed
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-responding-active-shooting-tulsa-oklahoma-hospital/story?id=85120242
GIST	<p>At least four people are dead and multiple people are injured following a shooting at the Natalie Building at St. Francis Hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on Wednesday, according to police.</p> <p>Police received a call of a man walking with a rifle near a medical office shortly before 5 p.m. local time. When police responded, they said it turned into an active shooter situation, according to Tulsa Police Captain Richard Meulenberg.</p> <p>When police entered the building, they found multiple people shot in one area on the second floor, including in an orthopedic office, authorities said. The victims could be a combination both of employees and visitors, authorities initially said. The Natalie Building is a medical building on the hospital's campus.</p> <p>"Officers immediately rushed to the second floor where the shooting was taking place, when they got there they found a few people had been shot, a couple were dead at that time," Meulenberg told ABC News. "We also found at that time who [we] believe and still believe to [be] the shooter because he had a long rifle and a pistol with him."</p> <p>The Tulsa shooting comes amid a spate of shootings in the U.S., including the Uvalde shooting in Texas where 21 people -- including 19 children -- were killed, and a mass shooting at a Buffalo, New York, supermarket that saw 10 Black people shot dead.</p> <p>One of the Tulsa victims died after leaving the scene trying to seek medical aid, Meulenberg said. It is unclear at this time how many others were wounded in the shooting, though Meulenberg believed it to be under 10.</p>

The shooter died from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound, according to Tulsa Deputy Chief Eric Dalglish. Police were still working to confirm the identity of the suspected shooter, a man believed to be between the ages of 35 and 40, he said during a briefing.

It appears both weapons were fired, Dalglish said. It is unclear if the suspect was targeting anyone specifically, he said.

Police said they went through the five-story medical complex room by room to secure the building.

"We are doing a meticulous floor-by-floor, room-by-room search ... It's calmed down. We're trying to connect people and we're hoping not to find any victims," Meulenberg said.

Police said they are also investigating a possible bomb threat that may be connected to the suspected shooter.

Authorities evacuated a home in Muskogee, Oklahoma, about 50 miles southeast of Tulsa, after receiving a tip that the suspect "may have left a bomb at this residence," Muskogee Chief of Police Johnny Teehee said Wednesday night.

A bomb squad was on scene and police were working to obtain a warrant to search the residence, he said.

Muskogee Mayor Marlon Coleman later said the bomb squad cleared the location of a potential threat, and that the scene had been "turned over to the necessary authorities."

The Tulsa Police Department said to stay away from the area of the shooting and that reunification for families will be at Memorial High School on the west side of LaFortune Park.

Tulsa Mayor G. T. Bynum expressed "profound gratitude" for the "broad range of first responders who did not hesitate today to respond to this act of violence."

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt also praised the first responders who "did their best to contain a terrible situation" and offered to provide the city with any state resources needed.

"What happened today in Tulsa is a senseless act of violence and hatred," he said on Twitter.

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have been briefed on the shooting, White House officials said.

"The White House is closely monitoring the situation and has reached out to state and local officials to offer support," the White House said in a statement.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	06/01 SPD halts adult sex assault investigations
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/seattle-police-halted-investigating-adult-sexual-assaults-this-year-internal-memo-shows/
GIST	<p>Seattle police's sexual assault and child abuse unit staff has been so depleted that it stopped assigning to detectives this year new cases with adult victims, according to an internal memo sent to interim police Chief Adrian Diaz in April.</p> <p>The unit's sergeant put her staffing crisis in stark terms.</p> <p>"The community expects our agency to respond to reports of sexual violence," Sgt. Pamela St. John wrote, "and at current staffing levels that objective is unattainable."</p>

Law enforcement agencies here and across the country have grappled with labor shortages during the pandemic and since the 2020 protests following the murder of George Floyd. But Seattle's failure to staff its sexual assault unit stands out from other local police departments and raises questions about the Seattle Police Department's priorities, advocates say.

The memo, sent April 11, emerged amid a wave of new political promises for policing in Seattle. Last fall, Seattle voters elected a new mayor who rejected calls to defund the police and campaigned on a platform to clear public spaces of homeless encampments and strengthen public safety.

Behind the scenes, police leaders confronting an ongoing staffing crisis shored up patrol and positions that respond to homeless encampments, while some investigative units shrunk.

Now the department's lack of attention to its sexual assault unit is threatening the viability of cases, as delayed investigations and evidence collection possibly hinder their outcomes.

In the memo, St. John went on to say that she was not "able to assign adult sexual assault cases" that came into her unit. Cases involving children and adult cases that had a suspect in custody — a fraction of adult sexual assaults reported to police — were being prioritized. The unit just had too few detectives.

Those concerns bear out in fewer referrals from the sexual assault unit to prosecutors. King County prosecutors say they've communicated with the sexual assault unit about understaffing concerns, but little has changed.

Assistant Chief Deanna Nollette in an interview with The Seattle Times and KUOW this week dismissed St. John's portrayal of what was happening in her unit as "not accurate" and a "gross oversimplification."

"Sexual assault cases are still being assigned, but the workload is being triaged based on a number of factors that we would traditionally use to triage those cases," Nollette said.

Nollette emphasized that staffing shortages were being felt across the department. She did not provide an up-to-date count of how many adult sexual assault cases were on hold, although detectives in the unit are keeping a list with dozens of cases.

Other political leaders expressed skepticism at the idea that departmentwide understaffing was to blame for the sexual assault unit's predicament.

Sen. Manka Dhingra, D-Redmond, a senior deputy King County prosecutor who has led efforts in the Legislature to improve treatment of sexual assault victims, said the sexual assault unit's problems were about priorities, not adequate staffing.

"I cannot really tell you how pissed I am about this," Dhingra said. "Because it is completely unacceptable. This is 2022. We should not be having this conversation about allocating resources for survivors."

A starved sexual assault unit

The staffing crisis at the Seattle Police Department is not new.

The department has been losing officers since the beginning of 2020, and staff levels plummeted to a new low at the end of 2021. Whereas 2020 began with 1,290 officers in service, by March 2022 those numbers dropped to 968 — well below the department's own projections and what the city expected to spend on salaries.

Nollette defended the sexual assault unit's low staff numbers, saying units across the department felt the impact of the losses. The sexual assault unit wasn't even the most affected, she said.

“I could bring anybody in here from anywhere in the department and they would tell you the same story,” Nollette said.

Seattle police staffing numbers presented to the Seattle City Council on April 26 show that the reductions in the workforce have not been felt evenly across the department.

According to council central staff, the percent of the force in operations support — which includes training and personnel on extended leave — and the patrol division has increased while investigative units have thinned. Diaz explained that maintaining patrol numbers wasn’t just important for trying to control 911 response times, but also for taking in reports of rape and sexual assault.

“If we don’t have an officer to respond to sexual assault, we’re never going to have the followup to be able to investigate it,” Diaz told the council. “So I’ve tried to make sure we’ve maintained our patrol staffing levels.”

At the top of the department’s priorities for investigating adult sexual assault cases are those with suspects in custody, according to an internal response to St. John’s memo — a small portion of the cases the unit typically sees.

Now, the unit maintains a list of new adult sexual assault cases it’s simply unable to investigate for lack of detectives, according to internal communications at the department obtained by KUOW.

Currently, the sexual assault unit has five detectives to respond to sexual assault and child abuse reports for the entire city, which has had 225 sex offenses reported so far this year, according to the department’s crime data. Yet other units that don’t investigate violent crime have more staff.

The department’s Alternative Response Team — the unit that responds to homeless encampment removals — is now staffed by twice the number of officers on the sexual assault unit after an additional seven patrol officers were added to the unit this year. The department’s general investigations unit, which investigates property crime, has 12 detectives. Far more property crimes are reported to Seattle police each year than sexual assault, but they are simpler to investigate.

“When you have businesses that are the single biggest loss leaders in the country telling you, ‘We are going to close our businesses and leave the city of Seattle’ if we don’t do something about the crime, we have a responsibility as a department to try to do what we can do to support them with policing,” Nollette said.

The department has allowed investigative units, including the sexual assault unit, to fall from 16% of the total sworn force in 2020 to 14% currently, while the proportion of police in areas including patrol, leadership and operations support has increased.

The understaffing in the sexual assault unit has drained the morale of its employees, most of whom are overworked and burned out, according to a detective in the unit who requested anonymity because SPD policy prohibited them from speaking with the media. While detectives struggle to make a dent in large child abuse and sexual assault caseloads, the department has also drafted them to work security and traffic control at sporting events.

Sgt. St. John wrote the memo after [a KUOW story in April](#) that showed Seattle police were investigating few adult sexual assault cases while struggling to meet the demand required by law to quickly resolve cases involving children. St. John declined to comment for this story.

At the time St. John wrote the memo, 30 adult cases were waiting to be assigned to detectives, and 116 alerts showing that identifiable DNA from rape kits had been uploaded to a federal database and needed attention, St. John wrote to Diaz.

The sexual assault unit had historically been staffed with 10 to 12 detectives, St. John wrote, but that the unit could start chipping away at the backlog of adult sexual assault cases with eight.

Mayor Bruce Harrell declined to be interviewed for this story, though mayoral spokesperson Jamie Housen said that a detective had been added to the sexual assault unit this year.

“Mayor Harrell has been unequivocal that SPD needs more officers to ensure specialty units are well staffed so that investigations are completed swiftly and thoroughly,” Housen said by email.

Since St. John’s April 11 memo, detectives have started to receive assignments for new cases with adult victims, but the number of cases that are waiting to be investigated has grown. Even with an added detective, adult assignments are still falling by the wayside, according to the detective inside the sexual assault and child abuse unit.

There are now 48 adult assault cases that aren’t being investigated, according to the detective.

Victims wait, cases suffer

Since 2020, King County prosecutors have seen fewer sexual assault cases referred to their office from Seattle police. Between January and April of 2020, Seattle police referred 123 sexual assault and child abuse cases to prosecutors. In the same time period this year, prosecutors have received just 72 cases from Seattle police.

Ben Santos, chair of the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Special Assault Unit, said he’s discussed the problem with St. John. He said on more than one occasion she’s described dozens of cases sitting on her desk, unable to be assigned because of a lack of detectives.

“[Seattle police leaders] are having to make really difficult choices right now, given that homicide and violent crime rates are up,” Santos said. “We have done our best to try and let people know what that means on the sexual assault side — it means that these cases are not being investigated the way they should be.”

He said if detectives are getting assigned a case later than they normally would, it makes it challenging to collect evidence that’s temporary in nature, including surveillance video, third-party witnesses, and physical evidence.

“I really think that to a degree the investigations themselves suffer,” he said.

As do the victims. Santos said he’s received reports that victims who go to Harborview Medical Center for treatment after being sexually assaulted can end up waiting hours to file a report with a Seattle officer.

Increasingly, victims of sexual assault who report their cases to Seattle police aren’t hearing anything back, said Mary Ellen Stone, CEO of the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center.

Seattle’s slowdown in investigating adult rape cases doesn’t match what Stone has seen from other local law enforcement agencies.

“We work with 38 jurisdictions, and while everybody’s dealing with backlogs and everybody’s dealing with staffing shortages, we’re not seeing something similar from other jurisdictions,” Stone said.

Seattle City Council public safety committee chair Lisa Herbold said in an email she had been communicating with advocates who have raised the alarm about victims whose cases are not being investigated, though she was unaware of any policy within Seattle police to stop assigning adult rape cases to detectives.

	<p>The police department has planned to add yet another detective to the sexual assault unit this month to deal with caseload and staffing concerns, according to Nollette. But the long-term solution to understaffing in the sexual assault unit was to increase hiring across the department, Nollette said.</p> <p>To that end, Harrell announced an initiative to increase police hires last month, while last week the council approved a proposal from Herbold to free up more than \$1 million in unspent salary savings to fund new police hiring incentives and recruitment.</p> <p>Advocates have stressed, however, that they'd like to see more transparency in how SPD allocates the resources it already has.</p> <p>On Tuesday, a man reported to police that he had been raped at knifepoint.</p> <p>His report was added to the list of stalled cases.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Seattle Chinatown-ID stabbing injures 1
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/police-investigating-downtown-seattle-stabbing-victim-in-critical-condition
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Police were searching for a suspect after a man was stabbed and critically injured Wednesday morning in the Chinatown-International District, authorities said.</p> <p>A 50-year-old man, was taken to Harborview Medical Center for treatment after being stabbed in the neck around 9:15 a.m. near the 1000 block of S. Jackson Street, police said in a written statement.</p> <p>Police found the unidentified victim near 8th Avenue S., and S. Jackson Street with a stab wound to his neck, according to police.</p> <p>Police said the suspect fled from the scene before officers arrived. It was not immediately clear if the victim knew the suspect or what led to the attack.</p> <p>Investigators searched a nearby encampment for a possible scene of the crime but did not find one.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	06/01 Spokane 2 arrests; Home Depot arson, theft
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/2-charged-in-6-7-million-home-depot-arson-theft-in-spokane
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. - Two people have been charged in a Home Depot arson and theft in Spokane that cost millions of dollars in damage.</p> <p>Spokane Police arrested 59-year-old Kennie Calvert and 26-year-old Sierra Fry, suspected of orchestrating a theft at a Home Depot on Newport Hwy on March 19. Calvert is alleged to have started a fire inside the store as a distraction, while Fry stole items and walked out.</p> <p>The fire destroyed shelves of merchandise, causing an estimated \$6–7 million in damages.</p> <p>Spokane Fire Department investigators and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) determined the cause of the fire as arson, and police detectives began looking for a suspect.</p> <p>Calvert was arrested Sunday when police were called to another robbery at a different Home Depot on March 29. She was booked into the Spokane County Jail for first-degree arson and the separate theft incident.</p> <p>Fry was arrested Tuesday and charged with retail theft with special circumstances.</p>
	Return to Top

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[Return to Top](#)